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World Review

Incorporating Review of Reviews

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ON COVER:
Detail from Study 1951 *by Francis Bacon*

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LETTERS AND POINTS

FEDERATION OF THE DANUBE

SIR,

It is very gratifying to read Col. Miksche's excellent article in the November issue and I am convinced that I am expressing the sentiments of many Central Europeans in thanking you for its publication.

Col. Miksche deserves the praise and will, I am sure, earn the admiration of a great multitude of Central Europeans for his courage to have spoken not as a narrow-minded chauvinist and petty imperialist, but as a Czech patriot and a European.

As to his suggestion to create a Danubian Federation consisting of Bohemia/Moravia, Austria, Hungary and Slovakia, it would, in my opinion, not be adequate. For economic, and also for historic, reasons it is indispensable that Croatia with its Adriatic ports—and consequently also Slovenia—should be included in its boundaries. It should also be joined by Transylvania, the formerly independent or semi-independent principality, and by Roumania. It goes without saying that Carpatho-Ruthenia, which was bartered away by Dr. Benes and his associates to Russia in 1943, will also have to return to the family of Danubian nations to which it has belonged, in spite of Mr. Molotov's assertion to the contrary, for a thousand years.

The Danubian Federation should be, in my opinion, organically linked up by all other Central European groups of nations similarly organised, and integrated into the future organisation of Europe.

PETER P. PRÍDAVOK,
General Secretary,
Slovak National Council Abroad

SIR,

With very great interest I have read the remarkable article by Lt.-Col. F. O. Miksche. Although the future balanced structure of Europe will depend to a very high degree upon a properly organised Central Europe, I believe that in this country, and more so in the U.S.A., the knowledge of that part of Europe is not overwhelming.

It is therefore all the more praiseworthy that you have directed the attention of the politicians to that part of Europe which has been mishandled, mostly through the ignorance of great powers, so often and to the detriment of the whole of Europe.

R. STORCH,
Sudetendeutsch-Tschechischer
Föderativausschuss
London, W.C.2

BÖCKLIN

SIR,

May I congratulate *World Review* on the timely article by Robin Ironside.

Böcklin's art is a puzzling phenomenon and it is difficult to assess its value with detachment. People, and I think particularly of Swiss people, who grew up when he was alive, admire him out of piety, whereas the younger generation mainly ignores his genius.

Robert Ironside is, to my knowledge, the first critic who has attempted and achieved a fair analysis of Böcklin. It seems to me important that he points with emphasis to the curious sensation of fascination and repulsion a spectator feels whenever confronted with Böcklin's work. If power of visualisation and excellent craftsmanship range Böcklin among the prominent painters, his choice of subjects certainly contributes to our feeling of repulsion.

Contemporary second- and third-rate artists delighted in melodramatic and sentimental subjects and showed a marked preference for Roman and Grecian backgrounds. No one comparing their paintings with Böcklin's can, at the first glance, deny a striking similarity. Unfortunately it was Böcklin's fate to be tied up with trash and sickening sentimentality which prevented a just appreciation of his art. The cause of our negative reaction today is very often due to unpleasant associations with cheap, ephemeral art of the

nineteenth century which interferes with our direct approach to Böcklin. It is Robin Ironside's virtue to judge him on his own merits and thus to achieve an impartial and necessary revaluation.

HANS WEISS,
Zürich

WITTGENSTEIN

SIR,

I hope you will let me correct a serious mistake in the article 'Ludwig Wittgenstein' in this month's *World Review*. Mr. M. Cranston says: 'I think it is true to say that in the end he had come to believe in the Roman Catholic faith.' This opinion is wholly mistaken. I can say from personal knowledge that though Wittgenstein read the New Testament and was interested in religion, he had no form of Christian belief.

For the record, it would be useful if I might correct some minor mistakes of fact in Mr. Cranston's article:

1. Wittgenstein did not 'turn from Russell to Frege', but was in touch with Frege and strongly admired his writings from the beginning of his philosophical studies.

2. The translation into English of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* is not by F. P. Ramsey, but by C. K. Ogden.

3. Wittgenstein did not go to Vienna in 1926 to live in a house which he had built for himself; between 1926 and 1929 he was building a house there for his sister, Mrs. Tyrone Stonborough.

4. The notes known as 'The Foundations of Mathematics' were only lecture notes taken by a pupil, and should be distinguished from the Blue and Brown Books, which were carefully composed dictated prose works.

5. The title of Wittgenstein's last book, shortly to be published by Messrs. Blackwell and Mott, is not 'Untersuchung', but 'Philosophische Utersuchungen'.

6. Wittgenstein was teaching in Cambridge from 1944 to 1947, not 1945 to 1947.

7. Wittgenstein spent the last months of his life (i.e., from February to April 1951) in Cambridge, not in Oxford. He lived in Oxford for a while before that.

G. E. M. ANSCOMBE,
Oxford

OUSPENSKY AND GURDJIEEF

Sir,

In the September and October correspondence columns, Dr. Stopes' comment on a passage from *In Search of the Miraculous* was regrettable, and Mr. Rom Landau's reply was not helpful. I would, therefore, venture to suggest that, as stepping-stones to the appreciation of the ideas of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky, the following books (should Dr. Stopes not have read them) are useful:

Venture With Ideas, by Kenneth Walker.

The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution, by Ouspensky.

The Crisis in Human Affairs and *What Are We Living For?*, both by J. G. Bennett.

On page 47 of *What Are We Living For?* Mr. Bennett removes the mask of Gurdjieff's disturbing diction in the passage of which Dr. Stopes complains, and reveals the underlying idea, which is merely a statement of the inter-relationship of all parts of the Universe. 'Eating and being eaten' may appear repellent, but when translated as 'interchange of and transformation of energy', the words lose their cannibalistic flavour.

M. B. HINTON,
Eastbourne

H. H. BRINDLEY

SIR,

Chance put into my hands the October number of your *World Review*. I feel I must express my appreciation of the worth of a magazine which selects for publication such a moving and perfect study as Portrait of an Old Man by H. H. Brindley, a writer whose work I do not remember seeing before.

OVERTON FULLER,
London, W.C.1

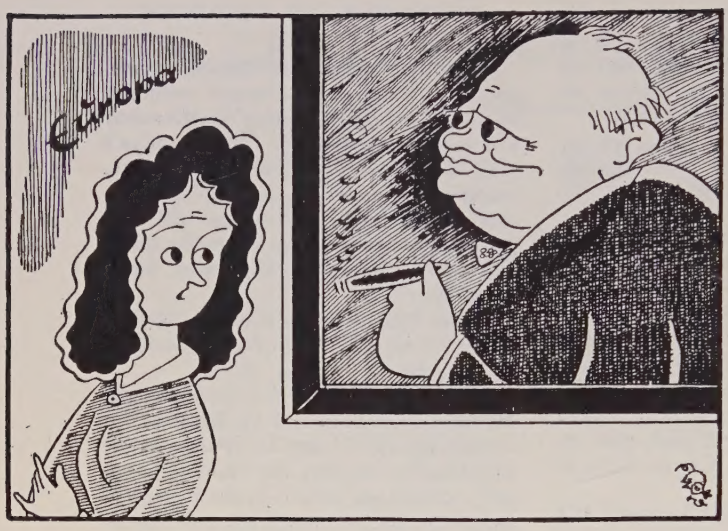
FESTIVAL ENGLISH

SIR,

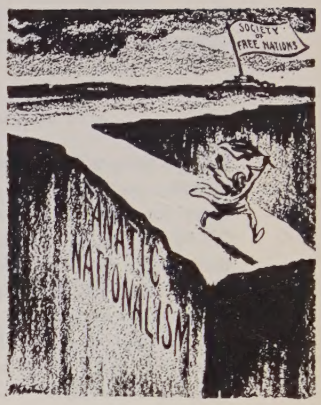
Congratulations on your very welcome words on Festival English. The only danger I can see is that of choice specimens becoming collectors' items—thereby winning preservation rights. . . . 'Words well-used in the service of our land, honest on the tongue as bread and beer, fashioned by an island race suspicious of new-fangled gibberish . . . keep them and use them well . . . they are your heritage.'

PHILIP OAKES,
Epsom

Cartoon



Europe: I used to have such high hopes of you
HAMBURGER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG

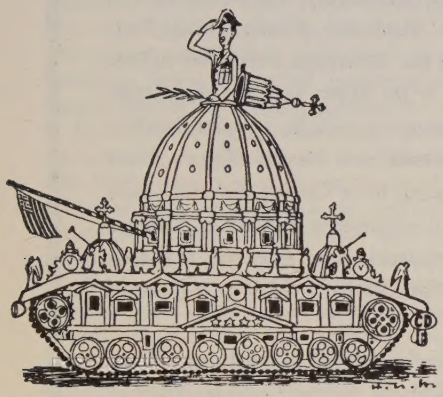


Dangerous Turning
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

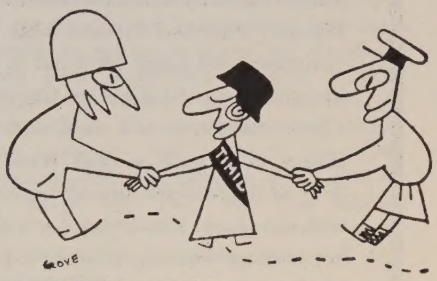
Guns, not Butter DIE ZEIT (Germany)

Comment

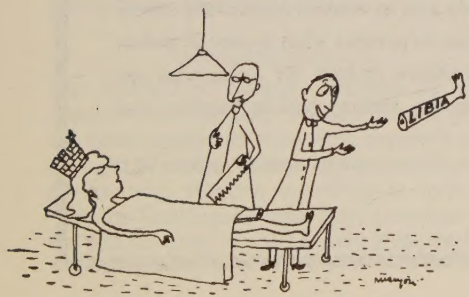
Excuse me, we've come to supervise the free elections
HAMBURGER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG



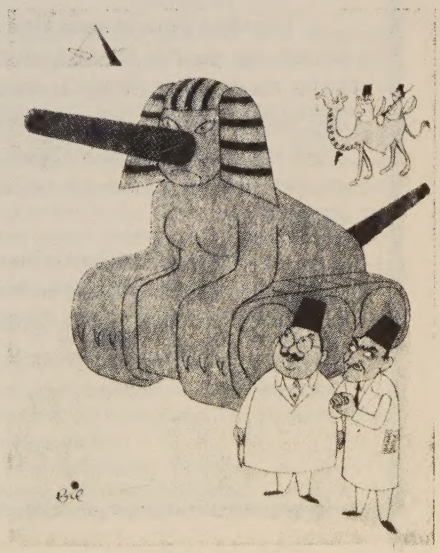
General Mark Clark re-enters Rome
DIE WELTWOCHE (Zürich)



Little Miss Timid
LE CANARD ENCHAÎNÉ



Off you go—free and independent
CANDIDO (Italy)



You see, Farouk, we're ready in our own way
NEBELSPALTER (Switzerland)

Resolutions

1. I RESOLVE:

To set my face against decent ordinary everyday folk as heroes and, worse still, the presentation of heroes as ordinary everyday folk, etc. (Fry's *Sleep of Prisoners*), against all exhibitions planned like towns where no one can find their way and towns planned like exhibitions which are never put up, and against a number of abuses of the language from which I single out for the time being the archaism of male cookery experts ('you take your pigeon and let him be dressed cunningly with fennel, etc.').

To oppose all forms of You-Can't-Take-It-With-You-ism in literature. In *You Can't Take It With You*, the father of the family is 'good' because he abandoned all forms of work and discipline and had himself a good time, addressing God as one homely old philosopher to another. This situation, which is directly descended from Renan and Dostoievsky, was reproduced in Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (with its 'good' alcoholic), Eliot's *Cocktail Party* (a tiresome old gossip turns out to be one of the mysterious Priest-like figures who direct events), Graham Greene's *Heart of the Matter* and *End of the Affair* ('good' adulterers this time) and is now running riot in popular lending library works such as *Little World of Don Camille* and Neville Shute's *Round the Bend* (half-Asiatic aircraft mechanic turns out to be Christ). In connection with the above, I resolve to leave the theatre whenever a mysterious stranger or personage who may turn out to be Death appears on the stage and to switch off the radio as soon as the characters mention the Holy Grail or a quest of any kind.

2. I confer awards of some kind or another for the year upon Julien Gracq for refusing the *Prix Goncourt*, on Alberto Moravia for the brilliant chapters in his *Conformist* where the abnormal hero tries in vain to make a perfectly dull middle-class marriage, to William Empson whose *Meaning of Complex Words* was the most valuable book of the year, to Covent Garden for securing after all the first performance of *Billy Budd*, to Dylan Thomas for his *White Giant* poems.

3. I resolve to answer letters more quickly and to waste no sympathy where it is not due and to continue in *World Review* to present what is new in painting, music and arts. Among writers I continue to look for those who are interested in human behaviour and its results rather than in motives and 'states of mind'.

DESMOND FITZGERALD

Notes

THE MARSHAL'S AID

While American aid continues to sustain the Western European nations, economic conditions in the eastern satellites of Russia have now deteriorated to a point where Moscow finds itself obliged to reduce its demands on them. Poland and Czechoslovakia are in the grip of major food crises, and even in Rumania a winter meat shortage is threatened. Although the Kremlin's economic integration policies required Poland to export food to the other satellites, the Warsaw government has now been obliged to import 100,000 tons of potatoes from Eastern Germany. It also now appears to be confirmed that the Russians themselves have been obliged to abandon the Five Year Plans which have been running consecutively since 1928, and are now concentrating exclusively on expanding heavy industrial production to match that of the western economies.

In an endeavour to maintain a greater outward show of unity, the satellite press has lately been toning down much of its Moscow-inspired criticism of individual local leaders, and many of them have been allowed for the first time to assume individual prominence in the Moscow papers. During their recent visits to the Russian capital, they have been accorded much greater consideration, and there is an evident attempt to put them in better heart by relaxing some of the exorbitant demands that Russia is making on her satellites, while convincing the Russian people that they are members of a powerful and closely-allied bloc of nations. Moderation, both internal and international, seems likely to be official Kremlin policy in the immediate future.

STRASBOURG

The Council of Europe continues in its condition of congenital *impasse*. Britain, to the great surprise of those who expected a change of policy under a Conservative government, remains unwilling to unite with the Continental countries; Scandinavia will not join in until Britain does, and the other countries are reluctant to unite without Britain and Scandinavia. As usual, the British are getting the blame.

It is an open question whether a service or a disservice has been rendered by the visit of fourteen American Senators and Congressmen, who came to discuss the situation with twenty of their European colleagues. The Americans have been seriously disillusioned at what they consider not only a lack of the will for real unity, but also at the laggardly measures being taken to deal with Europe's economic and social difficulties. They were genuinely shocked to find so many cartels and monopolies, and such disparities between rich and poor in countries like France and Italy. Moreover, coming from a country where isolationism has been almost an epithet over the last ten years, they were bewildered to find a close parallel in Britain's attitude to Continental affairs. They were all men of weight and authority, distinguished for their broadminded international views. It is to be feared that they will now subject their country's aid programmes to a scrutiny which Europeans may well find embarrassing.

DEFENCE

In spite of the political and economic difficulties which beset General Eisenhower, Europe's defences are already in very much better shape than they were a year ago. By the end of 1951, there were eighteen Allied divisions in Germany, compared with only seven at the beginning of the year. There are three corps and three army headquarters instead of none; Antwerp and Bordeaux are superseding Hamburg and Bremen as supply ports, and the balance of forces at the northern end of the Iron Curtain is approaching equality. The remaining disparity is in the matter of reserves—Russia can call on a hundred divisions, and the Western allies perhaps on ten.

The long-term build-up is what is causing such head-shaking amongst the

politicians and economists of the twelve (soon to be fourteen) North Atlantic Treaty Organisation countries. Plans are still being discussed for each country to contribute in relation to its national income, somewhat on the basis of a sliding income tax scale. This may solve one aspect of the situation, but the distribution of raw materials is an equally difficult factor. It is clear that the manufacture of heavy weapons should be entrusted only to those few countries able to produce them most economically. But this means that an unfair proportion of their steel output must be diverted for this purpose, while the other countries can concentrate on lucrative consumer production. This is the main problem being faced by Mr. Harriman and the N.A.T.O. executive bureau.

ITALY

Discussions aimed at removing the restrictive clauses in the Italian Peace Treaty and the search for some means of overcoming the Soviet veto on her membership of the United Nations should not be allowed to hide the disquieting course of internal political developments in the country. Briefly, the power of the Communists is not decreasing and that of the neo-Fascists is not only increasing but has many dubious undertones. Material prosperity is probably greater than it has ever been, but the middle-of-the-road democratic parties, who have maintained themselves in power since the war, are riven with dissension, and any new election must show a drain of power to the Right.

Perhaps the most disturbing element in the situation is the notable cooling of relations between the Vatican and Signor de Gasperi. The Church was probably the main factor in upholding the position of the Christian Democrats in the election of 1948. Yet there are signs that its support will go in the future to the parties or personalities who advocate more drastic methods of dealing with the Communists, and, if necessary, the Socialists. Former Fascist leaders such as Grandi, Bottai and Federzoni are now living in Rome again, and could quickly be joined by former colleagues now hiding in Argentina. They may not stand for public office until 1953, but if the elections to be held next year fail to provide a majority government, their chance will come.

JAPAN

The trend of public opinion in Japan reflects in even sharper form the conflicts in her defeated European partner, Germany. The question of rearmament is dividing the country into those who claim to have learned a lesson, and the arch-imperialists who presumably never learn, or at least will never recover their position until rearmament is in progress. Japan's conception of collective security is: 'Show us the security and we will collect.' Rearmament is likely to prove expensive, and with the present wave of prosperity, the Japanese would prefer to leave the burden to the American taxpayer. Financial reasons have led to a coincidence of opinion between the reactions of the mercantile classes and the political objections of the Left.

The 75,000 man police force, armed and trained by the occupation authorities, would normally be the instrument to be enlarged for the purpose of releasing American troops for service elsewhere. However, the former militarists find this force much too civilian in character for their tastes, and are declining to co-operate in its expansion. They are demanding a total 'de-purge' of all army officers and the immediate release of war criminals under sentence. Various plans are being put forward to re-organise professional forces amounting to some twenty divisions, with 1,500 aircraft and a 250,000 ton navy. Conscious of the rôle that is being allotted to them, of providing the main bastion against Communist aggression against Asia, the Japanese are likely to make exorbitant demands in return for their co-operation.

CORRECTION

GREECE, TURKEY AND THE ATLANTIC. *By an unfortunate error, the sentence which Major Tufton Beamish, M.P. wrote as 'Between two and three thousand men who fought on the Communist side . . . are probably still at large in Greece' appeared (on p. 17 December issue) as 'Between two and three* hundred *thousand . . . etc.'*

Editorial

BILLY BUDD

The Novel by HERMAN MELVILLE

In 1843, after his nightmare whaling voyage and his interlude in the cannibal islands, Melville, who was by this time down on his uppers, shipped as a common sailor on board the U.S. frigate *United States*, homeward bound from Tahiti. He was ordered to the foretop, and the captain of the foretop was an Englishman called Jack Chase whom he describes (in *White Jacket*) as 'a Briton and a true blue; tall and well-knit, with a clear open eye, a fine broad brow, and an abounding nut-brown beard. No man ever had a better heart or a bolder. He was loved by seamen, and admired by the officers', etc., etc. Jack, throughout two volumes, habitually talks like this: 'You are right—right as this leg. Virgil, you are a trump: you are a jewel my boy! Ay, ay, my lads, let us hate the one, and cleave to the other!' He is, in fact, the sailor on the cigarette packet, the ideal shipmate. Our reaction to him is one of instant disbelief, even positive dislike. But, in one form or another, Jack Chase (Masterman Ready, Amyas Leigh) appears again and again in the extraordinary sea-novels of the nineteenth century. He must have had an origin in nature. If he does not figure today in, say, *The Ship* or *The Cruel Sea*, then this may be due to a change in author's technique and not to the disappearance of arch-decent clear-eyed Jack. However this may be, Melville was beglamoured, once and for all, and thanked his sweet stars that kind fortune had placed him near Jack in the frigate.

The master-at-arms, 'a sort of high constable and schoolmaster, wearing citizen's clothes, and known by his official rattan' was, on the other hand, dark and delicate, while 'his snaky, black eye, that at times shone like a dark-lantern in a jeweller's shop at midnight, betokened the accomplished scoundrel within.' He would in any case have been the most hated man on board, but besides this he was the head of a complicated smuggling system which involved an amazing network of deception. This man, whom Melville calls Bland, also exerted a fascination over him. Bland, he thought, was 'an organic and irreclaimable scoundrel', possibly without a soul, who acted wickedly 'because wicked deeds seemed the ligitimate operation of his whole infernal organisation.' Nevertheless, Melville, holding forth in Mess A, No. 1, undertook to defend him on the grounds that evil *in this world* might be but good disguised, and that we cannot guess at the eternal judgment 'ineffably beyond the comprehension of the honourable board of Navy Commissioners.' 'I will stand by even a man-of-war thief,' he adds, 'and defend him from being seized up at the gang-way, if I can—remembering that my saviour once hung between two thieves, promising one life eternal.' There is a hint here of a very peculiar obsession of Melville's, to which I shall return in a moment.

During his time on board Melville thought a good deal over the evils of corporal punishment. He witnessed a number of floggings, and once came very near to being flogged himself. It was charged against him that he had been found absent from his station: in point of fact he had never even heard that he had been assigned to a new post. He saw that his case was hopeless. He was sent to the main mast; the captain refused to listen to him. At this moment a wild thought occurred to Melville of rushing at the captain and pitching him head-first into the sea, 'though he who so rushed must needs go over with him. My blood seemed clotting in my veins; I felt icy cold at the tips of my fingers, and a dimness was before my eyes. But through that dimness the boatswain's mate, scourge in hand, loomed like a giant, and Captain Claret, and the blue sea seen through the opening at the gangway, showed with an awful vividness . . . Locking souls with him, I meant

to drag Captain Claret from this earthly tribunal of his to that of Jehovah, and let Him decide between us.' Before this could happen, one of the corporals of marines interceded for Melville, and so, encouraged by his example, did Jack Chase. The captain 'looked round the packed and silent crew, and saying *you may go*, sauntered aft to his cabin.' It was this rebellion, or near rebellion, of Melville's that gradually turned into the mystical of acceptance of punishment in *Billy Budd*.

In the twenty years or so which elapsed between these experiences and the time when he came to use them as the groundwork of *Billy Budd*, Melville had invented, almost single-handed, the *kind* of symbolic tough-adventure stories which everyone tries to write today. These stories have been exhaustively studied in recent years by American critics in a search for meanings ('Wonder ye at the fiery hunt?') which I should be quite incapable of summing up, but it is certain that behind all Melville's work is the resolute effort to worst the huge question of good and evil. And while he struggled with the vision of elemental badness and goodness, he fell into certain marked habits of thought.

1. He came to express himself in Catharist or Zoroastrian terms, that is, *in a contrast of blackness and whiteness, or light and darkness:* Claggart, the sinister Master-at-Arms, and fair curly-topped Billy are the two last representatives of this astonishing dualism. Nathalia Wright, in *Melville's Use of the Bible* points out that, 'If the meaning of the white objects he mentioned varies from book to book . . . there is about them all a suggestion of the infinite. The blond villian is inscrutable; the white whale is uncapturable; the pockets, crevices and voluminous folds of the white jacket[1] are inexhaustible; the first, blond incarnation of the confidence-man—the deaf-mute—is uncommunicative; the fate of the fair, white-clad Billy Budd is inexplicable. Most of the Bibical white objects he cited actually touch the subject of immorality: that death itself was less disturbing an idea to Melville than infinity is often suggested in his imagery . . . Far more awesome than the spectre of death is the whole monotheistic tradition —unfixed by place, shadowed by a sense of physical dissolution, looking to a disembodied life of the spirit.'

2. He had derived from 'the whole monotheistic tradition' *an idea of a mysterious reconciling agency*, fixed and absolute, beyond our worldly conception, where the irritations of his own life in New England, the torments of floggings at the mainmast, pain, insanity, oppression, injustice would be naturally resolved into their proper place. In contrast with this distant region (glimpsed by Billy and Captain Vere alike as a 'white sail' on the horizon), everything in human existence is shifting and contradictory.

3. *There had grown on him an obsession with the story of the Crucifixion* (which I would distinguish from the unfortunate tendency of many nineteenth-century authors to draw 'Christ-like' heroes).

He was particularly concerned with the passive acceptance of fate by the truly innocent (like the cabin-boy Pip who is lost in the holocaust of the *Pequod*). No doubt the fiasco of *Moby Dick*, the nagging of his relatives by marriage and the cloud of insanity had driven Melville to think of himself at times as this persecuted innocent, as though life had brought him again and again to that acute moment when he was at the point of an unjust flogging. And he was haunted, possibly as a result of this experience, by the details of the crucifixion itself, which had apparently become identified in his mind (by the time he wrote *White Jacket*) with the image of a male-factor hung up in the mizzen rigging or hung at the yard arm, suspended at any rate far above the sea and the upturned faces on the deck. White Jacket, you remember, defends the master-at-arms 'from being seized up on the gangway . . . remembering that my saviour once hung between two thieves, promising one life eternal.' The episode of the punishment of Steelkilt in *Moby Dick*—(he is falsely informed against as a mutineer)—is another example, and Steelkilt does actually hang between the two informers. In *Billy Budd* the obsession reaches its climax at Billy's execution: '. . . the vapoury fleece hanging low in the east, was shot through with a

[1] Melville had no overcoat on board the frigate and had to make himself one out of a white shirt, lined with rags and old stockings. He never managed to get the lick of paint necessary to make his jacket waterproof

soft glory as of the fleece of the Lamb of God seen in mystical vision, and simultaneously therewith, watched by the wedged mass of upturned faces, Billy ascended; and ascending, took the full rose of the dawn.'

Billy is hung (I don't know whether readers need reminding of this) as the result of an entirely false charge. Claggart, the evil master-at-arms, has accused him to Captain Vere of inciting the men to mutiny. Claggart has done this only because he is essentially wicked and incapable of bearing with the goodness and open-ness of Billy Budd. Captain Vere knows perfectly well that Billy is devoted to him and the best of his foretopmen; he invites Billy to answer the charge, but Billy is overcome by his paralysing stammer ('it comes and it goes') and, unable to speak, hits Claggart on the jaw. The master-at-arms falls dead. Captain Vere knows the danger of mutiny and the necessity of extreme discipline. He calls the officers to a drumhead court martial, hears Billy sentenced to death without lifting a finger to save him, and the next morning all hands witness punishment as Billy is hung from the yard-arm.

Of course, *Billy Budd* is not only the story of Calvary transposed to a man-of-war: an important point, for example, which (this is stressed in the operatic version) is the great flaw or defect in his physical perfection. This stammer 'bringing to the face an expression which it was a crucifixion to behold' is the immediate cause of Billy's downfall, since he cannot bring out the words to refute Claggart, and there is some suggestion that the flaw, in this world of cloudy physical and spiritual values, is something (as in *Erewhon*) which brings punishment on itself. And, though Captain Vere is certainly representative of Divine Justice, he is also in a close relationship to Billy, fatherly perhaps, but with a faintly unwholesome tinge. In the crucial interview when he tells Billy that sentence of death has been passed upon him, 'the austere devotee of military duty, letting himself melt back into what remains primaeval in our formalised humanity, may in the end have caught Billy to his heart, even as Abraham may have caught young Isaac on the brink of resolutely offering him up in obedience to the exacting behest.' Another modification of the story comes from Billy's innocence itself. It is Christ-like (that is, according to Melville's idea of Christ) but it is also the innocence of a healthy animal who has 'always had to live rough', the primitive happiness which Melville thought he found on the Marquesas.

If I have said nothing so far about the libretto which Forster and Crozier have made from Melville's book, that is because I think they have preserved the atmosphere of it so faithfully. It was well worth doing, since Melville, with his thematic material and his astonishing dialogue which veers from naturalism to apocalyptic ravings 'howling like a thousand devils in the cordage', is a first-class subject for opera. (*Billy Budd* has, in fact, already been made the basis of a one-act opera by Ghedini—and in Italy last year the book was selling fast in Rome and Milan.) I do not agree with criticisms that the libretto is 'difficult' or that it suffers from the same complaint as *Peter Grimes*—vagueness and divided sympathies. We have here the three immemorial characters of opera and melodrama, villian, hero and administrator of impartial justice (usually 'the Duke', here Captain Vere), and instead of the love theme, the conception of a mysterious overriding sympathy and forgiveness. I do not think you need to have studied Melville's ideas beforehand to grasp them as they are presented through the music. The sacrifice of Billy, if not as simple as Carton's in *The Only Way*, is just as easy to follow; the instinct that says *the best must go* is very deep-rooted, while theatrical audiences have recognised for centuries that the innocent on the stage are likely to suffer. Captain Vere's extravagant devotion to duty is theatrical also; and the most important passage in the book, the captain's interview with Billy, is correctly made important in the opera when a spotlight plays on the shut door of the state-room till the curtain falls at the end of the intermezzo. What is lacking, though, and

it gives a dangerous anti-climax and sense of disappointment, is an effective ending. Ill-conceived by the joint authors is the prologue and epilogue where Captain Vere, in a long black wanderer's or Peer Gynt's cloak, 'passes off' the story of the *Indomitable* like a Home Service Narrator. 'I'm an old man now and my mind can go back in peace,' etc., etc. I take it that this was conditioned by Britten's love of a falling, whispering close. But the idea of the captain, whose destiny is at one with his victim's, living on to a comfortable old age, is shocking in its dramatic impropriety. Melville has the captain die in action against the French ship *Athéiste*, and in his last agony he murmurs Billy's name. Meanwhile the crew of the *Indomitable* keep track, after their ship is broken up, of the wood of the yardarm which was Billy's gallows and 'to them a chip of it was as a piece of the cross.' You may not very much like the way Melville underlines his symbolism here. But at least he has the courage to sustain it to its illogical conclusion.

D. & P. M. FITZGERALD

BILLY BUDD

The Score by Benjamin Britten

CHARLES STUART

AFTER one hearing at Covent Garden and a strenuous week with the vocal score, the music of *Billy Budd* is, I find, beginning to take lasting root. Scores of this kind grow in the heart like a tree. The tree need not necessarily be sound in every limb. *Budd* has a certain amount of dead or dubious timber, though not much in proportion to the rest. The exclusion of women and women's voices technically restricts the composer's palette. This, however, is a dramatic rather than a musical handicap: from his many-tongued orchestra and an elaborate choral lay-out for male voices Britten gets all the opulence and variety that any pair of ears can reasonably assimilate in one night.

Allowance made for the occasional flawed page or episode, this is Britten's strongest and loveliest score so far. It shows among other things that he is not marking time. When genius starts repeating itself (and genius, or a measure of it, must be allowed to Britten), it dwindles to talent. Much of the *Budd* music is, of course, a reflowering of the technical procedures which gave us *Peter Grimes*, *Albert Herring* and the *Spring Symphony*. But important new elements run alongside. Britten has rediscovered the common chord, the doh-mi-soh-doh of the classroom, music's daily bread; and he has made of it something new, disturbing, tragic even. Certain pages of *Budd* have a simplicity, an outright technical bareness which make Stravinsky's *Persephone*, for instance, seem plumed and bedizened by comparison. Another new note is the frank and inspired re-application of Verdian formulae for the crucial Claggart music.

The music carries the tang of time and place. The year is 1797. We are on the *Indomitable*'s bustling main deck: guns, rigging, ragged seamen, officers with white silk calves. Trumpets chatter in thirds and octaves with martial urgency. High woodwind shrills an extraordinary pattern in major seconds as the yards are manned. A boarding party returns from a merchantman with a haul of pressed men, Billy Budd among them: in the orchestra we simultaneously hear bluff or sprightly horn and clarinet arpeggios which capture and distil everything one has known of sea balladry. This astonishing pictorial faculty in Britten, his trick of seizing on some scene or situation and turning it into living music, is not unique. We find the same thing in Weber, Wagner, Richard Strauss, and Puccini, a composer whom Britten surprisingly despises. These are great, or at any rate big, names. That

Britten may, without fatuity, be mentioned in the same breath, gives the measure of his achievement.

In a score which elsewhere is so elementary in a technical sense, as well as elemental in effect, the writing for the male choruses is complex and, when it comes to the battle scene (the opera's central climax), rather patchy in its brilliance. We are far from the monolithic man-hunt and closing choruses of *Peter Grimes*. The tunes embedded in the *Budd* choruses are good and whistleable. But their purpose is quasi-symphonic as well as choral. Two of them at least are for ever popping in and out of the orchestral commentary. Consider the use that is made of the 'O heave away!' phrase sung by the holystoning party in the opening scene. This tune becomes the symbol of rebellious stirrings aboard *Indomitable*. With great subtlety Britten has it surging in the bass against chromatics on the horns when Claggart in act three plays upon Vere's dread of mutiny. This is typical of Britten's mastery of his material. In building his thematic structure, he thinks back and ahead, hinting, recalling, giving foretastes. Half a dozen key harmonic formulae cumulatively pervade and colour his four acts, imparting to the whole the unity of a grown and growing thing.

Now as to the solo parts. We shall have to look more closely into the Vere music. A hindrance dramatically, he seems on a first impression to be no great help musically. He sings for the most part in a vein of pallid, sub-Purcellian declamation which makes me ask (not for the first time) why Britten so often makes his singers sound as if they were addressing an inattentive town's meeting. It has been suggested by some critics that Peter Pears has not got the right voice for this part. I dissent. If Vere rings hollow at the Garden, that is because he is without musico-histrionic substance. There are times, it must be admitted, when Britten treats the voice as a beast of burden, a mere word-carrier. At such times I tell myself that his true bent is symphonic, his natural medium the orchestra.

But then his vocal line suddenly starts flowing like sweet oil, proving that intermittently, at all events, his heart is in song. There is a case in point in the last act: Billy, awaiting execution, sings a ballad whose lines come in part from the rough, tarry poem which ends Melville's story. The ineffable tenderness of this number, as well as its extreme limpidity, are quite unmatched in modern music except by Anne's lullaby near the end of *The Rake's Progress*, which Stravinsky must have been writing about the same time, a coincidence which is worth musing by students of musical *Zeitgeist*. For me, however, the high plateau of *Budd* is all of the gun deck scene (act two) except the pert and folky sea-shanty ensemble, which might have been composed by Britten as a clever youngster in the thirties with an eye to a Prom performance. Claggart, having fearsomely quelled a brawl, comes up to the footlights for a monologue in which, like Iago in Verdi's *Otello*, he proclaims that he is dedicated to hate and evil. The affinity with Boïto's libretto was spotted by everybody on the first night. A good deal more important, however, is the affinity with Verdi's music.

When he vows *con forza* to wipe Billy Budd off the face of the earth, Claggart does so in strong sequential phrases and against an orchestral lay-out which are clearly modelled not merely on Iago's *Credo in un dio crudel* but also on certain other vehement numbers of Verdi's last period, including Ford's jealousy aria in *Falstaff*. The harmony is for the most part Verdi with a difference. It has a pungency here and there which would have made the composer of *Aida* wince. But the monologue's climax is a succession of major common chords in root position, with the full weight of the orchestra as well as the full power of Claggart's bass behind them. A supremely daring stroke. Probably there will be some debate about its propriety. The more finicky stylists will say that to introduce Italian blood and thunder into a tale and setting that smack of Dibdin, Rowlandson and Horatio Nelson, is a solecism. They will be laughably wrong. The eternal evil in Claggart overrules all considerations of time, place and nation. Britten's invocation of Verdi is so happy that it is as though the old man himself,

having, to be sure, brushed up his harmonic ideas, were writing again. The common chords in particular make my blood run cold. Altogether, this number is a litmus test. We shall be able to sort out the operatically alert from the operatically unaware in accordance with whether they salute the Claggart music or dismiss it as ham.

The wonder is that when Claggart has said his say with his feet in the footlights, the musical temperature does not drop sharply. Instead, the music remains momentous right to the end of the scene. Claggart suborns a seaman (The Novice) who, at his bidding, unsuccessfully tempts Budd to mutiny with guineas, and the scene ends with a swinging, headlong duet in which the veteran Dansker warns the sceptical Budd of Claggart's enmity. All this is handled sensitively and surely, with every vocal phrase, every orchestral tint and motif contributing to our sense of nearing doom. The Novice is a poor, cowed youngster who grieves bitterly that goodhearted Billy Budd is the man he must betray. Wry, delicate harmonies on solo strings tell us what is going on in his heart. But the evil bidding has to be done. He outlines to the impervious Budd a plan for mutiny. As he does so, muted trumpets sound remote, staccato chords which hint of terror and blood. Here again the procedure is neo-Verdian and comes off to admiration.

The Novice is a small but superbly realised part. We see him with a bloody back for a minute or two in act one after he has been unjustly flogged: an elegiac saxophone melody stamps the poor fellow lastingly on our memory. In the gun deck scene he shares fifteen pages or so of vocal score with Claggart and Budd. This is not much in singing time; but Britten's touch has such certitude hereabouts that a couple of bars tell us more than a couple of pages in the case of Vere. Britten is fortunate in his singer, William McAlpine, whose tenor and the way he uses it might have been expressly designed for the part. But he is equally fortunate in his Billy Budd—Theodor Uppman—who, as well as being handsome enough for an American musical at Drury Lane, has a baritone of quality which gets right out into the spaces of the Opera House. Frederick Dalberg's bass is not of the kind we shall tell our grandchildren about; but he has the build for Claggart and plays the rôle so well that Claggart goes without delay to join Scarpia and Paolo in the great gallery of operatic villains.

ON EACH AMBITIOUS MORNING

On each ambitious morning,
brisk with frost and brittle with resolve
sunlight promises, the hills dissolve
opportunities appear without warning.
Your dreams are gratified
as in a dream, a new world
is round the corner, old
customs must be discarded.

But slowly you will learn
the gradual approach, a task
attempted every day means undue risk;
you play for safety, turn
your lover to a last rough kiss,
acknowledge that the revolution dies in office.

PHILIP OAKES

THE REVIVAL OF JAPAN

D. DUXBURY

Most travellers to the Far East are impressed by the striking difference between the eager activity of the Japanese and the lethargy and indifference apparent in almost every other country except China. The people of Japan are cheerful, earnest, self-denying, and hard-working. They will halt their firm indulgence in work or play only to be polite either to each other or to the honoured visitor, who will continue honoured as long as he is in Japan. Whether his memory also will be honoured when he departs for home will depend perhaps on his nationality, but more likely on his own behaviour and understanding. For there is much to understand, and the years of Occupation have proved conclusively that it is possible to see all and to dabble in most of it without penetrating the heart of Japan's problems. And since these problems are but one side of what the outer world considers the problem of Japan, the most urgent need of the West and of Japan is mutual understanding.

This need is not fulfilled by politicians who talk sensationally about Japan's industrial capacity having doubled in the last four years. Comparisons with the industrial state of a nation defeated because it had undertaken more than its economy could bear, a nation which was industrially and financially prostrate, are pointless. At the end of the war Japanese industrial output had fallen to 40 per cent of the 1944 peak, and it was output of no consequence in peace. Little more than 12 per cent of the merchant fleet remained afloat. The machinery of the civilian industries had been reduced to a fraction of pre-war, partly by bombing, but mainly by scrapping so that metal could be used for war purposes. The products of the industries still active in Japan in 1945 became useless when the war ended.

The conversion from war to peace, the rehabilitation and re-equipment of industries to serve useful consumption, the revival of internal trade, and the restoration of import and export trade, have been achieved by the hard work of Japan's employed population of 50-odd millions, and by the injection of $2,000 million of United States aid. Besides dollars and the presence of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, the Occupation brought administrators, economists, labour experts, statisticians, and an increasing assurance among the Americans as they realised that their task was to re-create Japan in the image of the United States. Politically, the attempt was by universal suffrage and other liberal rights familiar to the West, to transform Japan into a democracy whose Emperor was reduced to human status. Industrially, the establishment of the right to work and of freedom to organise in free trade unions was matched by the attempted dissolution of the family monopolies (the zaibatsu) and other anti-monopoly notions popular in the United States. No one could doubt the paper value of the American urge to convert Japan into a political and industrial democracy, but probably General MacArthur and his immediate aides were alone in a confident belief that in five years all the theory had been translated into practical success.

The sincerity of the American efforts was evident in many of their works, and their health and welfare innovations or improvements will have lasting effects. In nothing is this more obvious than in the population figures. Probably three million Japanese are living today because of medical advances and protective measures introduced or made more effective by the Occupation, with a resultant drop in the death rate. But this great achievement has aggravated the basic Japanese problem, which is its growing population. On the

home islands to which Japan is now confined there are now 84 million people, compared with 72 million at the end of the war, and 66 million in the early 1930's. By 1960 the population will perhaps be over 90 million. Yet the land area of Japan is smaller (as the former Supreme Commander frequently remarked) than the State of California. The population per square mile of land is greater than anywhere except Belgium, and the population per square mile of cultivated land is even higher, leaving Belgium a poor second. Japan must import at least one-fifth of her food requirements, two-fifths of her wood and fibre, nine-tenths of her petroleum, nearly one-half of her phosphate, more than one-quarter of her potash, two-thirds of her iron, four-fifths of her lead, a substantial part of her salt, all her aluminium, and nearly all her tin, antimony, manganese, and many other materials.

With meagre domestic resources, the Japanese have almost within living memory built themselves into a modern industrial nation. But the relics of feudal organisation and social repression are there to hamper progress. Social development has not kept pace with industrialisation, and Japan's adult population lacks the basic technical knowledge which is common in the industrial nations of the West, the familiarity with radios, motor cars, and so on, which makes everyone a minor technician. In industry, commerce, and the professions such as accountancy and architecture, Japan has too few technicians, and even with American help it will be difficult quickly to overcome this major disadvantage. The country also lacks capital which will be vital to balanced industrial development, and she cannot hope to obtain more from her working millions because, again, there is no large body of people able or willing to invest, as there is among the public of Britain or the United States.

These weaknesses affect, and are themselves influenced by, the pattern of trade. Japan's impact on the rest of the world may be measured from this pattern, and the sad conclusion is that as a result of Occupation policy, the impact will be harsher than it was before the war and harsher than it need be. In the 1930's Japan obtained a major part of her imports from Asia, which also absorbed the greater part of her exports. To the United States she sent less than a quarter of her exports, and from the United States brought roughly the same proportion of imports. Today, far too much essential raw material is carried across the seas from the West. Not only does it cost more in itself; it incurs higher freight charges. Coking-coal from the United States costs nearly twice as much as from China, and more must be paid for soya beans, iron ore, and salt. In recent months some relaxation of controls has re-opened barter trade for key materials from China and North Korea, but the main problem of reviving trade with North East Asia has scarcely been tackled. The grave need is to reduce Japan's dependence on dollars and on the United States. This would be difficult, even if there were no political obstacles. Japan's principal exports to the United States before the war were of silk and silk goods which have been superseded in American trade by the concentration on nylon. On the other hand, Japan must buy from the United States cotton which costs dollars to replace cotton which she once obtained from India.

Lost sources of supply and lost markets in Asia must be replaced by more costly sources farther afield, and by greater exports to markets outside Asia. That explains the more acute competition which is feared by British industries such as cotton textiles and pottery. One reason why the cotton industry of Lancashire has not so far suffered more severely from Japanese competition is that up to the outbreak of the Korean war Japan's cotton industry had made too little progress in recovery, compared with other industries, and that since then the Korean war itself has directly and indirectly masked the problem of Japanese exports. Large quantities of textiles have been bought on American account as 'procurement demand' for Korea, and the inflationary influence of the war stimulated other markets to lay in stocks of textiles. But when the industry

has fully restored its fortunes, and when artificial demands are withdrawn, Japanese competition in textiles as in other products will be severe.

At present the cotton industry, and textiles generally, in Japan, make a poor showing against other industrial groups. The industrial revival since the war, remarkable though it is, must be regarded as ill-balanced. The official figures issued by S.C.A.P. are based on an index for 1932–6 of 100. Industrial activity in August last, on this basis, was 146·9. This figure represents the level of activity in all utilities (electricity and gas), mining, and manufacturing. The utility index was 187·3 and that for mining and manufacturing together was 138·6. Mining activity was at 124·2, whereas manufacturing was at 140·2. A further analysis of the details shows machinery manufacture at 216·2, chemicals at 148·4, food, beverages and tobacco at 100·0, and textiles at only 54·0. The recovery has been uneven, and if allowance is made for admitted low efficiency and high cost production in some branches of metal and engineering industry, the Japanese economy is not as strong industrially as some Japanese optimists and foreign pessimists would have us believe.

For her competitors, it is just as well that there should be weaknesses and unequal pressures in the economy of Japan, for if her present population, living simply and cheaply, were able to exploit every advantage of industrialism in the West, she would be economically invincible. An industrious people of so many millions, eager to prove their worth and their equality with the West, might bring havoc to European standards if all the other factors were in favour of the Japanese. The problems of Japan do, in fact, accentuate the world problem of Japan. It is too easy to exaggerate the influence of Japan's standard of living, and certainly no one who has visited the country, still less anyone who has walked through the factories and workshops, could talk rationally of 'slave labour'. But the standard of living *is* low, by almost any modern standards. Nor is there any great prospect of improving it so substantially as to make Japan's competitive position equivalent, say, to that of Britain. Comparisons are difficult because the methods of payment in Japan are probably the most complex in the world. The Japanese textile worker, for example, receives a money wage which is about one-quarter of that now enjoyed in Lancashire. But the Japanese worker lives in houses or dormitories provided by the employer, has free health services and entertainment, and many other perquisites to which Western workers are unaccustomed.

Supposing, by some great feat of financial manipulation, the wages of Japanese workers were suddenly raised to our level, how would the money be used? Not, surely, on the expensive types of residence which we consider proper. No sane man will build in Japan a house of brick or stone, unless he has riches enough to build according to the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, who so designed the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo that even the great earthquake of 1923 did no more than make it rock slightly on its floating foundation. The experience of centuries has proved that in a country subject to several major earthquakes and many small ones every year, the cheap and easily-erected house of wood is both necessary and sensible. Nor is there good reason why the house should be furnished with chairs and other paraphernalia of the West, if the people prefer a clean mat floor on which they never set foot without shedding their outdoor footwear. The nation eats rice and fish because these are, relatively, in plentiful supply. Are the Japanese to change radically—and perhaps to them distastefully—because the West does not like their diet?

Political arguments based on varying costs of living are, moreover, traps for the unwary. The contention that any nation with wages lower than some others must not be allowed to export, might conceivably be adopted to the disadvantage of European countries if and when the American economy sees the need to export manufactured goods in serious competition. We must encourage rising standards of life in Japan and in the East generally,

while striving also for conditions of world trade in which there is room for all. In Asia alone there is enough latent demand to absorb all the output from all the industrial nations of the world, if our so-called statesmen would but allow it to become effective demand. The alternative, which seems all too likely, is a fresh period of restrictive bargaining in which the barriers to trade will be progressively increased. Only the politically blind will fail to realise that there will thus be created new grounds for war, yet the present trend of Western thought about Japan's place in the Far East seems deliberately aimed at this end. Externally, the policy is to isolate Japan from her natural trading sphere in North East Asia, internally, to stimulate the need for unnatural trading affiliations with the West.

The political and economic trend in Japan itself now suggests that some of the benefits of the Occupation in preventing excessive exploitation of labour may soon be lost. Trade unionists during last year expressed to me their fears that the American attack on Japanese Communists might in suitable conditions be extended to become a witch-hunt reaching for any union leader or simple worker who had the insolence to stand for his rights or resist any worsening of wages or conditions. Present news from Japan confirms that industrialists are waiting for an opportunity to reverse the labour laws passed under American tutelage; whether the opportunity will arise, and whether employers will be able to take advantage of it, will depend greatly on how firmly we in Britain insist that industrial democracy in Japan shall be strengthened. We cannot do this without the full support of our European neighbours and of the Americans, and if we fail, we shall suffer with the Japanese people in a trade war which no one can afford.

Next month Mr. Edmund Blunden writes on CHANGES IN JAPAN

Slansky's arrest is surprisingly unimportant compared with the wider developments. People in the West have always been apt to overrate the importance of individuals in the Eastern European Communist societies. Though it sounds very commonplace, it is a fact that individuals really *do not matter much (with the exception of* one*!) there and that their being sacrificed at regular intervals is less due to personal feuds within the Party than to their expendability when a change of principle is at stake*

THE MANAGERS OF PRAGUE

STEPHEN W. POLLAK

WHAT occurred in the inner councils of the Stalinist hierarchy in Czechoslovakia between 6 and 20 September gave yet another curious twist to the tortuous course of the Revolution which began in St. Petersburg thirty-four years ago and the end of which, though vaguely discernible, is not yet in sight. Like everything else that is happening today east of the Elbe, Mr. Gottwald's curiously noiseless *coup de main* seems wrapped in the kind of fog which deadens the sounds and blurs the outlines of even the most momentous events there. It is this fog, generated by the strange mixture of Marxist dialectics and Moscow conspiratorial methods, with their resulting 'double-think' and double-talk, which leads—and is intended to lead—to a thousand-and-one contradictory and mutually exclusive interpretations in this and other countries, where ministerial reshuffles and shifts in the internal balance of power are exposed to the searchlights of press, radio, and a more or less well-informed public opinion.

On 6 September, the Central Committee of the Czech Communist Party met in extraordinary session, and the next day a laconic communiqué in the press announced the abolition of the post of Secretary-General of the Party, and the reorganisation of the Party's supreme

organs. On 7 September the Government met to discuss the translation into practice of the measures decided upon the day before by the Party, notably in the economic field. On 8 September the new ministers were appointed. On 11 September, another Cabinet meeting dismissed the Vice-Ministers of the reorganised departments. The same day the hitherto powerful Minister of Agriculture, Duris, the man behind collectivisation, resigned and was appointed President of the Slovak Council of Ministers. On 20 September the ex-Secretary-General of the Party, Rudolf Slansky, was appointed head of a new economic department under the direct jurisdiction of the Prime Minister Zapotocky.

These are the bare facts. To understand their significance, we shall have to look not at the changes themselves but at their object—the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. We must also ask ourselves whether the same old pack of cards has merely been reshuffled, or whether a change of substance has occurred in the value of the individual cards; whether, in fact, the kings are still kings and the knaves still knaves and the trumps still held by the same players.

Until the September events, the Czech Party differed from the other East European Communist Parties in two important aspects: first, the function of political party boss and that of head of the party machine (the *apparat*), normally in the hands of one super-boss approved by Moscow, were, after the war, divided between two men: Klement Gottwald as President of the Party, Rudolf Slansky as its Secretary-General. Secondly, the political direction of the party and its machine, usually split up between a 'Politburo' and an 'Orgburo', was, in the case of the Czech Party, in the hands of one single body—a 'Secretariat' elected by the Central Committee. This body consisted of the President of the Party, the Secretary-General, and the five Assistant Secretaries. Thus, apart from the President, the supreme body of the Party was made up exclusively of the men who controlled the Party machine. This apparent contradiction—dual personal control and unified organisational direction—amounted in fact to the unquestioned autonomy of the Party *apparat* and to the latter's unique predominance over the Government as such, the nation's economy, the army, etc. It is not for nothing that official commentaries after the 'reshuffle' charged the demised Secretariat with 'an incorrect relationship between Communists working in the Party's *apparat* and those engaged in the day-by-day direction of the State.' And, since all official appointments to government posts had to be vetted and approved by the 'Cadres Commission' of the Party, a situation often arose in which Gottwald, President of the Party (and of the Republic!), was, in his choice of personnel, at the mercy of Slansky, the man running the Cadres Commission as a vital part of the *apparat*.

All that was changed. Slansky, till then the most powerful man in the country, toppled from his pinnacle, and Gottwald, apparently eclipsed after the Communist seizure of power in 1948, assumed the factual leadership of the Party whose head he had, since 1945, only been in name. Yet at the same time—and this is essential—the abolition of the unitarian 'Secretariat' and its replacement by the more orthodox constellation of 'political secretariat' (Politburo) and 'organisation secretariat' (Orgburo) has plucked much of its power from the *apparat*: not only through the disappearance of the post of Secretary-General, but by the demotion of the five Assistant Secretaries, all creatures of Slansky, to secretaries of the Central Committee with very specific and narrowly-circumscribed tasks instead of the sweeping powers they held before. Their fall from grace is the more striking as the rôle of the Party's Central Committee, as conceived by Lenin before the Revolution, has in the course of years been reduced in all Communist countries to the rôle of a rubber-stamping body meeting at long and irregular intervals (about once a year in the people's democracies) to approve *ex post facto* the decisions of its Presidium and the Politburo.

How radical the internal swing of power inside the Party has been is best illustrated by the composition of the new Politburo. All its members are in fact members of the Government as opposed to 'machine men'

(*apparatchiki*), who have been relegated to the Orgburo where they are again under the direct supervision of Gottwald, the Orgburo's chairman. While it is the same men who are running Czechoslovakia after Gottwald's *coup*,[1] the subtle *quantitative* changes all of them have undergone have resulted in *qualitative* structural changes in the complex Communist hierarchy—vindication of the old Marxian theorem. Slansky became only one of seven Politburo members in the vigilant company of Gottwald, Premier Zapotocky, Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister Siroky, Dolansky, President of the National Planning Office, Cepicka, Minister of National Defence, and Bacilek, Minister of State Control. The most notable omission from this new septumvirate is Ladislav Kopriva, Minister of State Security (read police and secret police). Until September a member of the 'Secretariat', Kopriva, ruthless, ambitious, fanatical toe-the-liner, was reduced to a simple member of the Central Committee's Presidium, one of twenty-two, in fact. If one remembers the leading part played in all Communist regimes by the men in charge of the police, the exclusion of Kopriva (former head of the Party's Cadres Commission to boot) must play an important part in the evaluation of the events of September.

One thing emerges unmistakably from the changes in the Party's topmost direction: the creation of a Politburo composed entirely of members of the Government has sensibly reduced the autonomy of the *apparat*. But from this flows a much more important development. Those government departments directed by members of the Politburo have been lent additional weight and authority by virtue of their carefully-chosen heads, and thus provide a valuable, if not the only, clue to the new orientation in Czechoslovakia. Why were Bacilek, chief of the newly-created Ministry of State Control, and Cepicka, Minister of National Defence, elevated to the new peerage of the Politburo, while old and tested veterans of the Party, like Information Minister Kopecky, Minister of the Interior Nosek, and Minister of Education Nejedly were left in the relative wilderness of the Presidium of the Central Committee?

These questions may seem academic till we turn to the actual *cause* of this internal upheaval in the leadership of the Czech Communist Party. Apart from paving the way for Slansky's downfall, the reason was clearly the fiasco of the Czech Five-Year Plan, twice amended since its launching to meet the growing demands of the Moscow planners. Without going into the complex details of the Czech Communists' failure to live up to Soviet expectations, a few key figures will suffice to show the general trend. Whereas the Czech Five-Year Plan was expected to produce by the summer of 1951 an overall production increase of 20 per cent over the output of the first quarter of 1950, the increase actually achieved was only 13 per cent. Even more striking are the figures concerning the rate of productivity per labour unit. While the rate of productivity as compared to the first quarter of 1950 rose by 17 per cent in Hungary, by 13 per cent in Poland and Bulgaria, and by an average of 10 per cent in all Eastern Europe including East Germany, it was a mere 4 per cent in Czechoslovakia as against the Soviet-imposed target of 20 per cent! That an increase of 4 per cent in productivity is quite normal for an industrialised country like Czechoslovakia and cannot possibly be compared with the rate in a backward and agricultural economy like Bulgaria or Hungary does not seem to have impressed the Moscow planners or their Czech retainers. The fact remains that Czech production in its most important branches of heavy industry has fallen disastrously short of the targets, as was admitted by Mr. Ludvik Frejka, economic adviser to Gottwald, in the Communist organ *Rude Pravo* of 16 September. There he wistfully lists mining, heavy engineering and steel production as having not only fallen short of the 1951 targets but as actually having failed to reach the turnover of 1950.

Yet apart from shortages of raw materials and consumers goods, not to mention a growing inflationary pressure, one of the greatest obstacles to the total 'integration' of Czech economy into the Soviet overall plan is the unabating resistance of the Czech workers to the steeply-rising spiral of the working 'norms' imposed by the Government through the trade unions, and the resulting decrease in real wages. As

[1] With the exception of Slansky, arrested on 28 November. His arrest has, of course, in no way affected the trends described in this article. On the contrary, being an intellectual and a Jew, Slansky has long been a thorn in the *managers'* side, but Moscow's *timing* of his arrest is bound to remain a riddle for some time to come

regards inflation, it might perhaps be avoided, if the workers could be made to consent to the slashing of their wages to offset, at least partly, the frantic expansion of heavy industry at the expense of the production of consumer goods. As the trade unions' paper *Prace* lamented recently:

> 'The Unions continually come up against the conservative mentality of the least politically conscious workers who, through sheer inertia, still believe that the presentation of wage claims can lead to an improvement of their position.'

This resistance of the workers to further reductions in their standard of living through higher working norms and lower real wages has led to the Czech TUC shedding the last pretence to represent the interests of the Czech working class. One by one trade union leaders who still attempted to hold out against the increasingly strident calls for more work and more sacrifice on the part of the workers for the sake of the 'Workers' Fatherland' in the East have fallen by the wayside.

It is this creeping paralysis afflicting the Czech economy which has in the last resort, all palliatives having failed, led to the complete overhaul of the Communist Party structure. But how, it may be asked, is this reorganisation going to cure an economic *malaise* that has for three years defeated all attempts to remedy it? How, short of Moscow relaxing its strangling grip by releasing the country from obligations impossible of fulfilment, can Czechoslovakia recover its former prosperity? One obvious answer is, of course, that prosperity for its satellites has never been one of Moscow's aims. But Gottwald thinks that he has at least—and at last—hit upon the answer to the question how to deliver the goods which Stalin needs—and never mind Czech prosperity.

The answer is provided by the changes we have examined at the beginning of this article. Kopriva, Minister of National Security, is debarred from the new Politburo, while Bacilek, chief of the new Ministry of State Control, is 'in'. Thereby the dead hand of arbitrary police interference in the economic field has been largely removed, for it becomes clear on studying the terms of reference of the new ministry that almost all economic delicts in connection with the Five-Year Plan, with the accountancy of the nationalised industries, delays in delivery of goods, etc. will in future no longer come under the authority of the police but of the new ministry. Cases of negligence, incompetence, red tape, which have in the past been summarily dealt with by the SNB (secret police), very often to the lasting damage of the factory or even the industry in question, will now have to be dealt with in accordance with M. Bacilek's recent statement that 'it is the duty of the controllers [of the new ministry] to ascertain nothing but the facts, not to get mixed up in local feuds and to stick to the essentials of the jobs . . .' This is indeed a remarkable statement, following as it does upon years of arbitrary arrests for the least slip-up in the hectic production campaign. It may even mean that the police informer (in economic matters!) is being superseded by the accountant, an accountant, moreover, protected by a member of the Politburo, while the stool-pigeon's boss is a mere minister. All, no doubt, very complicated to a Western mind, but highly relevant in a 'people's democracy'!

Another ministry whose power has been vastly—and deliberately—boosted by the elevation of its head to the Politburo is the National Planning Office under M. Jaromir Dolansky. Together with the Minister of State Control, his colleague on the Politburo, Dolansky co-ordinates the activities of no fewer than sixteen 'technical' ministries, ranging from Posts and Transport to Forests, Building, Chemical Industry, Heavy Engineering, etc. Mr. Dolansky is certain to welcome the advent of the new Ministry of State Control as an overdue buffer between the country's economy and M. Kopriva's *sbirres* who not so many months ago arrested some of Dolansky's assistants right from under his nose. But the multiplication of the 'technical' ministries concerned with production under the overall guidance of the National Planning Office and the Ministry of State Control has had another highly important result. The fantastically inflated staff of civil servants in these

ministries is gradually being reduced by as much as 39 per cent as part of the new campaign of *decentralisation of industrial authority*, while the General Directorates of the nationalised (i.e. practically all) industries have been abolished. The main function of these Directorates had been not only to co-ordinate the various enterprises of any given industry, but also strictly to limit their freedom of action and, by implication, the powers of their managers. This duplication of authority had in the past led to interminable squabbles and jealousies concerning the competence of each individual enterprise as against that of the industry's General Directorate, squabbles which could not but have a blighting effect on production and the efficiency of management. Under the new dispensation, the respective ministries, shorn of two fifths of their bureaucrats, will deal direct with the managers of the enterprises, which means that much of the power hitherto wielded by the civil servants of the Directorates will in future devolve upon *technicians* on the spot. In this connection it is interesting to note that most of the newly-appointed 'technical' ministers are in fact technicians themselves recruited from among former managers. This applies to the ministers in charge of textiles, engineering, minerals, fuel, timber, petrol, and steel.

That this is not merely a change of teams but, far more strikingly, a change of principle if not of heart, is shown by two frank admissions of two outstanding Communists. National Planning chief Dolansky wrote in *Rude Pravo* in September that 'at all levels the principle of the responsibility of the individual must be imposed . . .', and Gottwald's economic adviser Frejka wrote in the same paper: 'The systematic application of the principle of responsibility of the individual had been hamstrung by an excessive centralisation which concerned itself with petty details . . .'

The Czech Communist 'Managers' have, as shown, recently won a fourfold victory: over the remnants of trade union principles, over police interference in their domain; over the all-powerful and ubiquitous influence of the Party *apparat*; and lastly over the stifling and paralysing sway of an inflated centralised bureaucracy.

The writer has in this article presented and analysed undeniable facts. He does not claim to be able to draw any conclusions as to the future from them, for the simple reason that in the Communist societies of Eastern Europe the premises for reasoned predictions are non-existent, the 'logic of events' being at the mercy of the highly 'illogical' vagaries and fluctuations of the minds of leaders who are prompted solely by expendiency demanded in any given situation. The last of these *apparent* deviations from Stalinist orthodoxy is a case in point: nobody who would have predicted on 5 September that within twenty-four hours the power of Rudolf Slansky and his uncannily powerful machine would be nullified by a Gottwald *coup de main*, by a kind of topsy-turvy *trahison des clercs*, would have been taken seriously for one moment. Yet this is exactly what happened, although those hoping for the defeat of Communism in Russia's dependencies can derive precious little comfort from these events. It all happened at the behest of Klement Gottwald, one of Stalin's most trusted lieutenants, and it all happened for the greater glory of the Soviet Empire. But perhaps, after all, there is a dim glimmer of hope in the fact that it happened under certain very real economic compulsions in Czechoslovakia, the lynch-pin of the Soviet satellite system, the one country in the Soviet *glacis* whose economic collapse Moscow could never afford, since it would mean protracted economic stagnation in an eternally-backward Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria.

Whether Gottwald has found the answer to Moscow's pressing question: 'Why can't you deliver the goods?' remains to be seen. And whether the so strikingly successful Czech 'Managers' will continue to be content with 'managing' more efficiently for a foreign master is another question. And the answer to that one should present a number of headaches to Gottwald in his newly-found omnipotence.

ANTI-AMERICANISM IN BRITAIN

C. J. M. ALPORT, M.P.

THE character of anti-Americanism in England has undergone a dramatic change during the last ten years. For the best part of two centuries the firmest friends of the United States were to be found among the radical bourgeoisie and the industrial workers. Its chief critics were those who espoused Conservatism in both politics and culture. Today the position is reversed. Anti-Americanism is now rampant among the Bevanites and their followers on the political Left, while the most ardent supporters of the American alliance are to be found in the Tory party. What is the reason for this sudden turn-over of sentiment?

The political moods of the United States have never been accurately understood, either by its friends or its foes in this country. As an American, writing in the anxious winter of 1942, said: 'Americans and Englishmen do not much like and do not at all understand each other.' The main reason for this misunderstanding is the temptation to accept at their face value the superficial similarities of language and habit which exist among us, and to try to read into American politics the normal reactions of Englishmen to the events which shape our political life here. It was, for instance, just as logical for George III's Tory Ministers to regard the War of Independence as a projection into another century and a wider sphere of Cromwell's revolution, as it is for the Bevanite today to identify American free enterprise with Conservative antipathy to Government controls. Both have been wrong. Such simple analogies between the sectional policies of the two great English-speaking communities are invariably false and lie at the root of the friction which has frequently vitiated their relations.

It was perhaps inevitable that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the partisans of the United States should be found among the middle and working classes. Although the insurrection of the American colonies had its champions amongst the aristocracy, Washington's victories were a bitter blow to the old Tory party and to the prestige of the monarch round whom so much of its influence revolved. For fully a generation after the Declaration of Independence, these resentments were kept alive by the Loyalist families—even today dubbed 'Tories' by the Americans—who had come to England with their 'tales of ill-treatment and oppression' and who succeeded in making life unbearable for more than one American representative at the Court of St. James.

But for those who did not share the resentments of English Tories or belong to the social groups from which their support was normally derived, the victory of the Thirteen Colonies evoked sympathy and enthusiasm. Its aggressive republicanism, the undisguised Whiggery of Jefferson's Declaration of Independence and the apparent equalitarianism of American society, all matched the current prejudices of the English political Left. This sympathy was fortified by the Dissenting tradition of the New England States which had strong spiritual ties with British Non-conformity, dating from the eighteenth century when it was at the flood-tide of its conquest of urban England.

During the first thirty years of the nineteenth century, events tended to harden these divisions. The war of 1812 was perhaps the stupidest war in history, and for its outbreak the traditional antagonism of the United States to Great Britain was mainly to blame. Even then it was a half-hearted conflict, and Jonathan Russell, the United States Secretary of Legation of that period, remained in London to carry out his normal diplomatic duties throughout the thirty months of its existence. Nevertheless, to Tory Ministers like Castlereagh and Canning, it was a stab in the back in the critical moment in English history—something only to be expected

from men who had, in earlier years, shared with their Whig opponents an unnatural enthusiasm for the Jacobins and regicides of France.

It was perhaps in a spirit of retaliation that half a century later the Right in England felt no compunction in giving its support to the Southern States in the American Civil War. Here again, Conservatives and Radicals saw mirrored in this struggle the political tensions by which they themselves were torn. The Confederates were assumed to represent the farming interests, landlordism and the framework of aristocratic government. The North, complete with its sturdy republicanism and its apparent distaste for privilege of any sort, stood, in the contemporary imagination, for the Liberal-Radicalism of the time.

Britain was, in 1866, at the beginning of a new bout of reformist agitation which was eventually, and perhaps surprisingly, to culminate in Disraeli's Reform Act of a year later. But this did not in any way affect the instinctive line-up of the Tories on the side of Southern traditionalism or of the Radicals with the industrialist Yankee North. To lead Radical opinion in this controversy was the rounded oratory of John Bright and, to give it substance, the whole weight of the Trades Unions. It is a pleasant paradox that the inspirer of the most tumultuous of the pro-North meetings—comprising 3,000 picked representatives of the London Trades Unions—was Karl Marx. Perhaps it was he who hammered out for the delegates the characteristic slogan 'America fights the battle of democracy.' It may also have been Marx who taught the proletarian orators of the period to assert, in the words of a United States Ambassador 'that the success of free institution in America was a political question of deep consequence in England, and that they would not tolerate any interference unfavourable to the North.'

Here again, the real issues in American politics were ignored or misunderstood. The Tories were no more in favour of slavery than were the Whigs. In fact, slavery had been abolished in the British Empire with general approval a generation before. The rank and file of British Trade Unionism had, if anything, less in common with Yankee 'big business' than with the planters of the Southern States. Yet, throughout the whole sad length of the Civil War, partisanship was rabid and its outcome had a profound influence upon the English political climate.

During the next thirty years Irish-American sympathy for Home Rule and the ardent anti-colonial tradition in the United States, which created during the Boer War a 'mad dog hatred of England', preserved two important sources of Tory antagonism and Radical sympathy. But a development which had a profound long-term effect on Anglo-American political relations was already in progress. From the 1870's onwards, an increased number of wealthy and cultured American families visited Britain and began to appear in British society. It is not without significance that Lord Randolph Churchill, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain and Lord Curzon, among the leading figures in Conservative politics, all married American wives. There is no doubt that the immense effect which Mr. Churchill's intuitive understanding of the American point of view has had on Anglo-American relations in general and the Conservative Party in particular, stems from the influence of the daughter of the owner-editor of the *New York Times*. It is symbolic, too, of the powerful impact of this feminine invasion that the first woman Member of Parliament of any party should be, not an English suffragette, but the remarkable American-born Lady Astor.

The penetration of the heart of the English Right by a score of American ladies did not entirely efface the long-standing antagonisms which previous history had created between Conservative opinion and the American way of life, nor for that matter did it weaken the traditional sympathy of the bourgeoisie and the working classes for American conceptions of equality and material progress. The late Earl Lloyd George, for instance, probably more than any other single British statesman, drew inspiration from American ideas. This was especially true of his

more 'radical' period, and his conception of 'the Cottage Man' in turn may have inspired Mr. Roosevelt's 'Forgotten Man' a generation later.

In spite of this trans-Atlantic traffic in ideas, the basic misunderstanding of the two peoples of each other's point of view still remained. For instance, in 1914 Ambassador Page records Sir Edward Grey as saying, when discussing a despatch from the American State Department: 'This reads as though they thought they were still talking to George III.' No doubt Woodrow Wilson's advisers in Washington felt on occasion that George III, or at best Canning, was still talking to them. The goodwill, which the entry of America into the war in 1917 produced, was soon dissipated by the American withdrawal from the League of Nations. To the Conservative Party in particular—trained as it was for generations in the unquestioning acceptance of the responsibilities of world power —this sudden betrayal of a solemn undertaking seemed to confirm its long-cherished belief in American inferiority. How could the rôle of world leadership be sustained by a nation whose standard of values sprang from a worship of the 'almighty dollar' and whose culture was expressed in the cacophony of jazz and the Hollywood film? The bitterness which Conservative leaders felt during that period was intensified by the long wrangle over the American debt and by the financial crash of 1929–33.

It is perhaps surprising that, in spite of their devotion to the League of Nations, the English Left made little attempt to lay the blame for its failure on American politicians and people. Perhaps the magic of Woodrow Wilson's idealism was slow to fade. Perhaps the loyalties which had survived the ups and downs of two centuries were too strong. At any rate, for them America remained, in spite of their disappointment, the champion of equality and progressive ideas for the whole world. Their enthusiasm was revived after the Roosevelt election in 1933 and during the formative period of the New Deal. To H. G. Wells, for instance, the latter held out an 'exciting promise' of that 'new phase in human affairs, that fuller life which is manifestly so possible and so tantalisingly not yet in our grasp.' For another giant of the Left, the late Harold Laski, it reveals that America had an irresistible attraction, derived primarily from its equalitarianism and progressive virtues but also from the 'driving power of its endless ingenuity'. For the unemployed and disillusioned who flocked in increasing numbers during the 1930's to the Socialist standard, the policies of the Roosevelt Brain's Trust spelt the hope of better times to come. In Henry Wallace's conception of 'the Age of Common Man' they saw their own individual rights and ideals represented, and drew from the American experiment an inspiration for their own future.

Even in the early days of the Second World War, when America was holding aloof and Britain was making her desperate stand alone against Hitler, these bonds of sympathy between the British Left and the United States remained unbroken. Recriminations were almost entirely confined to Right-wing spokesmen, with the exception, on all occasions, of Mr. Churchill himself. It was due mainly to his personal influence that the line-up gradually altered. As far as Conservatives in England were concerned, the entry of America into the war wiped away past grievances, and the patent sincerity with which America accepted her world responsibilities when war ended strengthened the feeling of solidarity which had been forged by comradeship in arms in all theatres between 1941 and 1945. The Conservative Party, particularly after the American response to Mr. Churchill's Fulton speech, has never wavered in its support for the American alliance, whereas ties of sympathy, which for nearly two and a half centuries bound the British Left to the United States, have been gradually submerged by its conflicting loyalties to the Soviet experiment. In choosing between the 'popular capitalism' of America and the 'totalitarian Socialism' of Russia, there is no doubt that left-wing opinion today is heavily biased towards the latter, however loud may be its criticism of Communist policies in Britain and abroad.

The most significant example of the new attitude of the Socialist Party to the

United States is found in the point of view expressed by the Bevan group. This newfound anti-Americanism among those who would claim to be the inheritors of the Radical tradition shows how far in fact they have departed from the paths which the old time Radicals so consistently trod. If, therefore, the security of the West and our hopes of peace depend upon the vitality of the Anglo-American alliance, we may conclude that in the immediate future a Conservative Government alone is capable of pursuing policies which will make this alliance work. It may be, as the *New York Times* recently said, that Mr. Churchill will be less compliant in the face of State Department policies than was his predecessor between 1947 and 1951. Nevertheless, his attitude and that of his supporters is today based upon the conviction that, without continuance of that alliance, all is lost, whereas any alternative government of the Left, in which Mr. Bevan must be a powerful influence, could scarcely avoid a substantial weakening of the alliance from which the U.S.S.R. alone would benefit.

The significance of this fact will perhaps not entirely be lost on those who still see in the United States a reflection of much that is best in British Liberal-Radicalism of the last two hundred years.

MODERN MAHDISM IN THE SUDAN

PROFESSOR THE SYED IKBAL ALI SHAH

In the six thousand years since its earliest written mention, the Sudan has always played a significant part in Middle Eastern history. Lying in the centre of the Nile, athwart the junction of the Mediterranean and Nilotic civilisations, it has never constituted a purely African area. Since before recorded history, there has been a constant movement of peoples, armies and trade across the Red Sea straits to and from Arabia, between Egypt and Ethiopia in the south, and contacts with the purely negro races of Central Africa itself. The rise of Mohamed Ahmed the Mahdi in the nineteenth century may be seen as a culmination of this international nature of the country's rôle in world affairs.

The dynastic Egyptians, themselves believed by many to have originated in south Arabia and passed through the Sudan in their emigration, struggled for over a thousand years to subdue the 'Land of Ghosts'—Nubia—to obtain slaves and secure control of the fabulously rich gold mines whose hundred-odd deserted workings still dot the landscape of the northern provinces.

After dynastic Egypt's collapse, Ethiopians, Persians and Romans overran or influenced the country. By the sixth century A.D., practically all the area was Christianised, the mission having been given great impetus by St. Mark's evangelising visit there in the first century.

Up to this time, Arab influence in the Sudan—as in most other places—was virtually non-existent. Upon Mohamed's rise in the seventh century, and the proclamation of his message in the Arabian Hijaz just across the water, Islam and Arabism became the main determining factors in Sudanese history.

Following gradual Arab settlement and Islamic conversion between 800 and 1800 A.D., the country's story was one of the rise and fall of kingdoms, tribes and leaders. In religious life several important schools of philosophic study sprang up, attracting students from India, Persia and Egypt. But the seven million Sudanese, while occupying a country a third the size of Europe, never attained political unity.

At this juncture Mohamed Ali, the Egyptian ruler, comes into the picture. Conquered by the Turkish emperor Selim I in 1517, Egypt had remained an Ottoman province. Mohamed Ali the Albanian ('the Great'), a man of remarkable vision and talents had, however, succeeded in achieving a measure of *de facto* independence. It was he who in 1800

decided upon the policy of conquering the southern hinterland, seeking slaves and raw materials.

By 1819 he had sent Ismail, his son, to conquer Nubia. The Sudanese beat him back. After several other unsuccessful attempts at conquest, the Khedive Mohamed Ali himself took the field, only to suffer a series of reverses from the scattered Sudanese tribes.

The subjugation of the southern territory became a prime preoccupation of the Khedives of Egypt. Egypt, nominally subject to Turkey but in fact independent, was ruled by Albanians, Circassians, Kurds and Syrians. Administering the various provinces, and everywhere in Government service, were to be found Swiss, German, French and British officers and officials. Among the British officers working for the Khedevial Government was Gordon; and thus it must be remembered that originally such figures as Gordon Pasha and Sir Samuel Baker held their mandate as representatives of Cairo, and not of Britain.

Leading Egyptian troops, these foreign helpers were dispatched almost indiscriminately into the Sudan, particularly under the administration of the Khedive Ismail. Many areas were gradually brought under some form of control, but it was at best a military occupation. The civil governors appointed from Cairo represented in most cases outstanding examples of avarice and tyranny. As in Egypt, the yoke of unscrupulous slave-dealing governors lay heavy upon Sudanese shoulders.

By the time of the conquest of Darfur's ancient kingdom in 1874, plans for canalising the Nile's cataracts, building a Sudan railway and the general consolidation of the Khedevial empire had been placed under Sir Samuel Baker. Colonel Gordon was called in to crush the slave trade, and in this same year was appointed Governor of the Equatorial Provinces. In the following year came war with Abyssinia. Gordon, as Governor, negotiated with the Ethiopian king, carried out campaigns against slaving; yet such was the state of government that he soon found himself displaced by Rauf Pasha. The new Governor-General was none other than a man who had been dismissed from the administration of Harar for slave-dealing.

The Egyptian policy of closing an eye to the slave traffic, the utter neglect of the country by grasping local governors, unbearable taxation—these are the factors which accounted in no small measure for the hatred, frustration and despair of the majority of Sudanese.

It was in such an atmosphere that, in 1881, Mohamed Ahmed proclaimed his mission to his countrymen as the 'Guided One'.

Born in Dongola in 1843, he was entitled to the style of Sayed—a descendant of the Prophet Mohamed. At the age of twelve, this intelligent youth already knew the Koran by heart, studying first under his father, a religious teacher. On his father's death, he was placed under the instruction of the celebrated divine Mohamed El-Khair; while still in his twenties, his personality had so asserted itself as to make him revered as something of a saint in his own right. Accompanied by disciples, he repaired to Abba Island on the Nile, to form a group dedicated to fasting and prayer.

Unable to bear the increasing depredations of the Egyptian extortionists, at the age of forty Mohamed Ahmed proclaimed to a small but influential gathering of sheiks that he was none other than the Mahdi: the man destined to rescue his people from defeat and shame, and to purify religious observances.

According to Islamic tradition, such a man—a 'Guided One'— may rise in times of dire suffering to lead the faithful in the right path.

Such a claim, of course, raised immense problems for the Egyptian Governor. Hearing of the Mahdi's message being preached by emissaries throughout the length and breadth of the land, Rauf Pasha dispatched two hundred men to seize him.

Indiscreetly firing upon the Mahdists at Abba, killing one, the entire formation was wiped out. Retiring to Mount Qadir, the Mahdi awaited further support. The military part of the campaign of Mahdism started from this incident.

Mohamed Ahmed was, however, no ordinary rebel, no typical religious man. During his reign and that of his Khalifas—

successors—a politico-religious State actually existed: the first welding together of the Sudan as a nation. From 1881 to 1899, in addition to ceaseless campaigns against the attempt by Egypt to re-establish political control in his country, the Mahdi and Khalifas built up their national administration. Typical of Mohamed Ahmed's message is this declaration issued by him:

> 'Before God and the Prophet, I declare that I did not take up the sword to found a kingdom on earth, nor to gather treasures for myself or to live in a fine palace; but to bring consolation to the faithful: to deliver them from bondage, and in order that the reign of the Moslems should shine forth once more in its ancient splendour.'

As the word of the Mahdi's appearance spread, and the Egyptians were known to be massing to attack him, support from tribes and chiefs poured in from every side.

Dressed simply in a white cotton robe, the Mahdi and his followers led an extremely austere life. They neither drank nor smoked; all income went into the *bait-el-mal*—the treasury—which paid the soldiers and civilian administration alike.

Constitutionally, the Mahdist régime followed closely the established pattern of the Islamic State. It is important to note here that Islamic statehood has been relatively neglected by many Western scholars; the unmistakable trend of Middle Eastern thought, however, in the past hundred years has shown a distinct swing towards this ideal.

Under the Mahdi, local leaders formed the link between him and the people. The Mahdi and his successor, like their namesakes who followed Mohamed in the building of the Moslem State, combined spiritual and temporal authority in the theocracy. All, however, were held to be under the supreme leadership of God, and took their code from the comprehensive legislation of the Koran.

The entire system in practical operation rested upon Koranic interpretation and the common will of the community, technically termed *ijma*. Law was administered in orthodox Islamic fashion, by *qadis*—judges delegated by the High Islamic Court. Military affairs were organised upon the Holy War (*jihad*) principle. Economy became geared to the religious system by the imposition of religious taxes, as in the classic period of Islamic consolidation under the Khalifa Omar in Arabia.

Every Mahdist's attitude towards the movement has always been greatly influenced by the essentially internationalist character of the Mahdi and his successors. While most outside observers saw the outbreak as a purely Sudanese insurrection, to the Khalifa and Ansar—as Mahdists were called—they were only incidentally fighting in their own country. Their mission, as they saw it, was to unite Islam and drive out impiety, wherever it might be found. They did not regard the purely military aspect of their work as of lasting importance. For this reason, and also because it has been fully dealt with in military histories, the Sudanese war is not germane to this study of the character of Mahdism today and yesterday.

Yet even in their fighting, the Mahdi and Khalifs were operating on several fronts, against 'enemies of the faith', rather than national enemies. Othman Digna—one of the most important Emirs or commanders—was continually engaged between 1890 and 1893 on the Eritrean front, repelling Italians and their allied tribes. Eighty-seven thousand men accompanied King John of Abyssinia against the Mahdi's eastern front, holding down 60,000 Ansar fighters in the town of Matamma alone. Until they shot the king in March 1889, and the Ethiopians fled, three months had been lost by the Mahdists, from a military point of view, in their Egyptian campaign. Threats from the Belgians in the Congo again brought strongly to Mahdist minds the international character of their movement.

On the historical side, clear evidence of his world-wide interest may be seen in the Mahdi's letters to the Senussi of Libia, and the Beduins of Arabia. Mahdists never referred to themselves as Sudanese, but as Moslems: and this is true of them today. The great Moslem reformer, Sayed Jamaluddin Afghani, in his contemporary rallying-calls to Islam, spoke in his journal, *The Bond*, of the Sudan struggle in just the same light. And it is from Jamaluddin's work that nearly every

modern Middle Eastern country traces its present-day independence.

This important side of Mahdist history has escaped most students of the period, in spite of the fact that for a century the followers of Mohamed Ahmed have been building up their organisation precisely on this basis. Conclusions by the average historian, based upon military and purely political writings of the eighteen-eighties, not unnaturally regard the war in the Sudan as a Sudanese war, and no more. The recent wholehearted enthusiasm which renascent Mahdism has given to today's Moslem Unity movement, the formation of Moslem Union branches throughout the country, show that the hard core of the Ansar is deeply wedded to pan-Islamism, as was their founder. In the words of the present Imam, son of the Mahdi himself, Sir Sayed Abdurrahman Pasha: 'Moslem Union and Mahdism are one and the same thing.'

The unexpected death of the Mahdi in 1885, at the height of his glory during the evacuation of the Sudan, had little permanent effect upon his creed or the fortunes of the movement. Under his successor, the Khalifa Abdullahi, consolidation of the State continued up to the latter's death upon the re-conquest in 1899.

It is from this date that the inception of modern Mahdism must be taken. Military victory and defeat, however brilliant, seems to have played no important part in either the vital concepts of the movement, or upon its determination. There is no doubt, of course, that the physical crushing of the Mahdist arms in 1899 retarded the development of its State organisation: as a spirit, nevertheless, it remained.

From the historical standpoint, events conspired to protect Mahdist aspirations, while no decisive achievement of war-aims had been realised. Egypt did not get the Sudan: under the Condominium Agreement, her rule there was limited to a considerable degree. As for slave-trading, it was stamped out: yet that this was but incidental may be gathered from Gordon's declaration of 1884, permitting the ownership and trading in slaves: ' . . . I also give you the right to keep slaves in your service without any interference from the Government or anybody else . . . whoever has slaves in his service shall have full right to their services and full control over them without any intereference whatsoever.'[1]

The destruction of the Mahdi's tomb, in the walled city of Omdurman in 1898, was believed by most people to be the final blow to Mahdism. Furthermore, the burning of the body and scattering of the ashes in the river was regarded as the only possible way of indicating that Mahdism was at an end.[2] But, as a matter of fact, the dome of the tomb was preserved, while the body is said not to have been destroyed. When, in 1947, the Mahdi's son was given permission to rebuild his father's mausoleum, it was stated that the grave was undisturbed.

After the Battle of Omdurman, the remaining members of the Mahdi's family fled to the south, making their way on foot towards Abba Island, the retreat of the Mahdi in former times. Captured by one of Kitchener's gunboats, only one son —Sayed Abdurrahman—and his mother survived, being allowed to settle on Abba Island, to cultivate the land. Cutting wood and ploughing with his own hands, the heir of the Mahdi farmed for thirty years, saying little, but watching Mahdism's regeneration. By 1924, when a new irrigation scheme started, he was a considerable landlord. Today, the uncrowned king of the Sudan, he owns nearly fifty thousand acres, employing sixty thousand men.

During the long period of reconstruction which began with the Condominium Agreement of 1899, the enduring power of Mahdism continued to function, underground, in three vital ways. The sheiks and tribal leaders throughout the territory reestablished their traditional authority, in most cases with Government approval. Concurrently, of course, the religious practices of Islam, in which the theme of the Mahdi was rooted, went on. As he had preached no new faith, it was inevitable that his followers should continue prayer meetings and religious exercises within the field of their established belief, which could not be touched. Though officially banned, his *Ratib*, a collection of prayers, enjoyed as great a currency as before. Through the annual Mecca pilgrimage, Mahdists maintained constant touch with international Islam's cross-currents.

[1] Wingate: Mahdism, 1891, Vol. V, Appendix: p. 551. [2] Budge, W.: Sudan, p. 279.

In economic reconstruction under the Anglo-Egyptian régime, the tax system of the Mahdia, which extended to the end of the Khalifa's rule, was retained, as the best possible one.[1]

The starting of a vast irrigation project, (the Gezira Scheme) in 1924, marked a new period in Mahdism's history. The principle that the use of land—though not its ownership—was nationalised, had been laid down by the Mahdi himself, and this was applied in the new fertile cotton-growing area. Apart from the prestige gained by this development using a Mahdi-Islamic system, wealth began to come into the hands of followers on the movement in the great new fields.

The improved economic and political position of the Sudanese by 1925 had combined with British constitutional intentions for greater national participation in the Government. With the regularisation of certain judicial and financial powers in the hands of local chiefs and their councils, Mahdists were able to exercise many of their principles with relative freedom. The essential basis of the movement in religion made it neither suspect nor vulnerable. So soon after hostilities ended did the relations between Mahdism and the Government harmonise that it is difficult to say precisely when this cordial co-operation began. Credit is due, perhaps, equally to both sides for recognising so quickly that only collaboration and mutual respect could achieve the progress desired by them both.

In the spread of education since 1900, schools of all grades—including Gordon College—had by 1936 sprung into being. Such schools as the Institute of Education, the Technical School and Law College were producing a proportion of Mahdist graduates whose influence upon the country assumed increasing importance. By 1933, over two hundred Sudanese had been appointed to higher administrative posts formerly held by foreigners. The Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, which affected the Condominium Agreement, finally decreed that Sudanese personnel should have preferential treatment in Government employment over foreigners.

The establishment of the Legislative Assembly in 1948, and the raising of Gordon College to University status are the two main factors which will canalise Mahdism's undoubtedly growing strength. The future of the Condominium is, of course, not fully decided. With a present Mahdist majority, the Assembly and religious leaders may be the determining factor.

Egyptian cultural influence, in the shape of schools, mosques and clubs, has been an established fact for a number of years. The Ashigga (pro-Egypt) Party, favouring union with Egypt, continues to operate, opposed by the Homeland Party, which calls for independence and regards Sir Sayed Abdurrahman, the son of the Mahdi, as their leader.

In actual fact, Mahdism's historical importance and widespread distribution in the Sudan lifts it from the purely political arena. Similarly, Sir Sayed as a religious head, patriarch and landowner, with an enormous personal following, stands somewhat higher than a political figure.

Mahdism is a part of the Sudan's living history. In a very real sense, too, it belongs to the political and historic development of the Middle East and of the whole 400,000,000-strong world of Islam. The past has shown that military and political considerations cannot affect it in any decisive way. For this reason the movement has been called 'The Great Phoenix'. Today, as yesterday, its wings are very widely spread.

[1]The Sudan (Govt. Publication) 1947

In the last sixty years Renaissance concepts of the plastic arts have been shattered. After the explosion, some in every land are beginning to clean up, to re-establish order. Jankel Adler was one of these

JANKEL ADLER

MICHAEL MIDDLETON

'THE landscape is slightly hilly. It looks as though there, behind a hill, is the sea, but instead it is another hill, and a hope is once more a disappointment. And another hill, and so on.

'A soldier on a motor-cycle passes, shouting that we should hurry up, the Germans are approaching. Panic breaks out. We drive the horses on to a gallop. So it goes on all through the night until dawn. The sea is still not in sight. When we look around we notice that our commandant has disappeared. A few NCOs, on horses, drive us on to greater speed.

'From time to time a car with higher-ranking officers breaks through, with colonels . . . The carts throw off the last of the ballast. Cases full of food-stuff go to the gutter. We pass a forest on fire. The smoke scratches the throat, the horses get terrified, begin to neigh and to kick . . . The automobiles are already far ahead of us . . . It begins to grow light . . . There is no human being anywhere.

'From a side-way emerge some officers in civilian clothes. Among them is our colonel. They are wearing peculiar hats (which) make them look vulgar, like commonplace people.

'I ask them what we should do. Everyone is thinking only of himself . . . One of the officers replies, "Do what you like." I reply, "That is no answer in the present situation and no answer from an officer." He replies, "I am no longer an officer as you can see." . . . This is the most terrible breakdown of a system that demands everything from others, but itself takes not the slightest responsibility.

'My plan is clear. I must go through to England. They say that British warships will take in Polish soldiers, but nobody knows anything for certain. The sea is still not in sight.'

Thus, in June 1940, Jankel Adler made his way, with a Jewish soldier who joined him, to St. Nazaire, and thus, without a passport, he came to Britain. When he died, in the summer of 1949, at the age of 53, he was still without a passport, but his influence upon painting in this country had been considerable. At a time when we were almost completely isolated from the rest of the world, Adler represented cosmopolitanism. To a still nascent neo-romantic movement—at home only in landscape and nature—he brought a reminder of the human figure, a confidence in the employment of certain idioms introduced by Picasso, and a sense of technical sophistication and finesse.

The central core of Adler's conception of life may be ascribed to his race and his upbringing. His early years were spent, in Lodz and Warsaw, at religious schools, and it was at first his intention to enter the priesthood. Although, later, after the first world war, he relinquished religious orthodoxy, he continued to read the Talmud, and his thinking was still influenced by Chassidic poetry and mysticism. The Jewish poet Itzik Manger once visited Adler's father in Poland and told him of Jankel's success as a painter. 'What a pity,' the old man replied in Yiddish, 'Jankel had such a good head for the Talmud. Now he is wasting his time drawing little people on paper.'

Judaism is all-embracing, imperative and categorical. By reason of their nomadic and unstable history, directed by their religious regulations more towards interpretation of the old than creation of the new, and bound by the taboo upon the making of images, imposed by their transcendental conception of the Deity, the Jews, through time, have made but few original contributions to the plastic arts. When, more lately, they have done so, their idiom has been romantic, didactic, symbolic and conceptual, reflecting less of the outer world than of the inner spirit. In

extreme form Semitic art tends to escape from the chaos about it to the ordered stability of abstraction, and with the abandon of romantics, Jews have tended to embroider their paintings with the most sumptuous of surface textures, the most oriental of colours. All these characteristics may be found in Adler's later work.

The language of contemporary painting he learnt in Berlin and the Rhineland, where he studied for a time under Gustav Wiethüchter at the Barmen School of Arts and Crafts. For something like twelve years, with only one major break, he made his home in Düsseldorf—one of the most active centres of German expressionism. He earned a gold medal at an all-German exhibition there, and taught at the Academy.

At Düsseldorf the spirit animating the younger generation was more intellectual, more methodical, than elsewhere in Germany. Dürer, Holbein and the French, Flemish and Italian primitives were admired. In 1929 Paul Klee left the Bauhaus to come to teach there, and it was assuredly from Klee that Adler first came to realise the interdependence of means and ends in painting. Here were laid the foundations of that astonishing control over his medium that was later to prove almost dangerous to him.

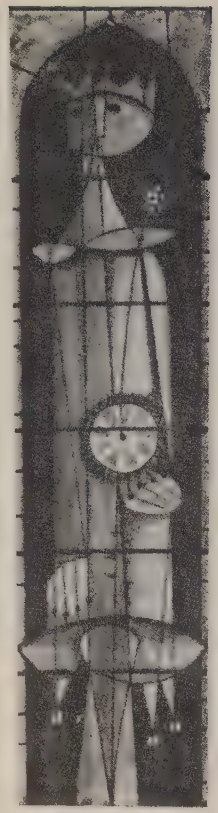
After the Nazi rise to power, Adler left Germany within a matter of months, and for the next seven years was almost constantly on the move—Paris, Warsaw, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Rumania, the U.S.S.R., Paris again, Cagnes. He volunteered for the Polish Army in France, and as a soldier finally reached Scotland, where he was discharged at the beginning of 1941. The past was destroyed, the slate wiped clean. Adler set furiously to work again.

I first met him when the war was over. A stocky figure, with spurred and spiny brows, he talked a good deal with his hands. The quietness of his rather deliberate movements was belied by the brightness of his eye and the penetration with which it was fixed upon one. One sensed a great reserve of strength and vitality. He wrote of Paul Klee, 'I have never seen a man who had such a creative quiet', and that might serve as a description of Jankel himself.

He was a true son of Lodz, and loved to have people about him. At the same time he built certain defences around himself, his work, his home. He tended to keep his friends in separate compartments, so that one group never met another group—was, indeed, probably unaware of its existence. If one called unexpectedly at his studio, one might hear, after knocking, a great shuffling noise. This was Jankel putting his canvases face to the wall. And after he had welcomed one in, though he might keep one singing songs far into the night, the canvases stayed against the wall.

Alertness and repose; a quick response to people plus a certain secretiveness. Adler had his share of the dualities which are present in all of us. There was a good deal of the mystic in him, but, at the same time, he was shrewd, even hard-headed, in many respects. He was essentially modest, but his last years were clouded by a sort of puzzled frustration because his work failed to receive the recognition he felt it deserved. He was proud and happy at the rebirth of Israel, but he hated all narrow nationalisms. It is not too much, indeed, to say that Adler's whole life and work was an attempt to synthesise opposing viewpoints. In the last sixty years Renaissance concepts of the plastic arts have been shattered. After the explosion, some in every land are beginning to clean up, to re-establish order. Jankel Adler, I believe, was one of these.

In his later work he set himself to capturing the overflowing exuberance of Picasso's forms with the sensuous delicacy of Klee's miniaturist technique; to give to figures and objects and animals an almost magical significance, but within a most permanent formal structure; to infuse abstraction with the rich complexity of living things. When he took up his brush again in Scotland, his colour was richer than hitherto; his style mature and unequivocal. He employed a range of shapes and forms that was at once personal and instantly recognisable, yet a part of the aesthetic climate of our generation—crescent and horn shapes, crutch shapes, boomerang shapes, figure-of-eight shapes, ninepin and spillikin shapes balanced in



Above: KEITH NEW
St. Katherine (*Sketch Design for Stained Glass*)

Left: DEREK WILSON
St. Francis (*Stained Glass*)

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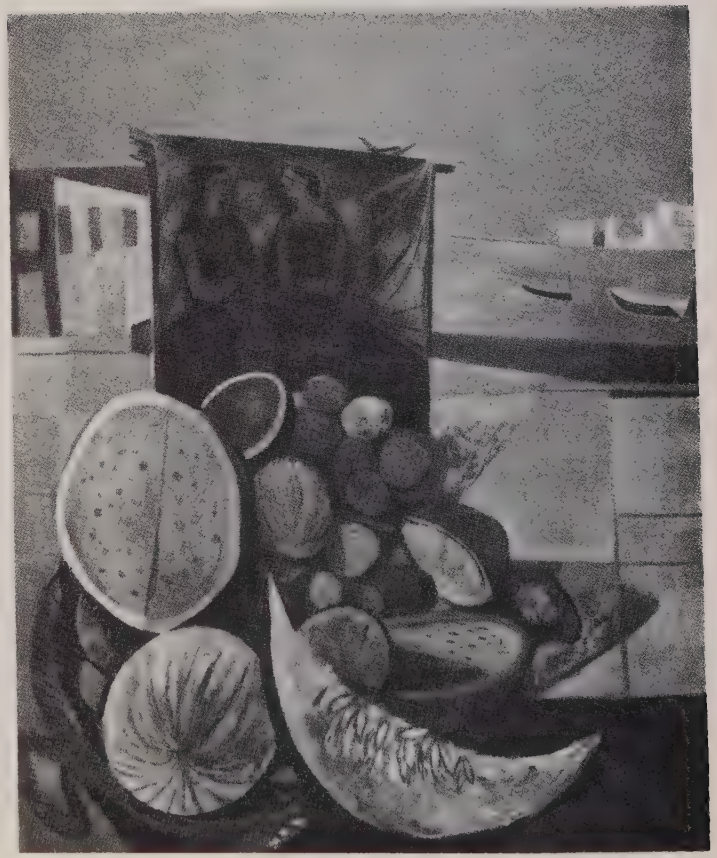
JANKEL ADLER *Girl with Still Life* (Oil)

(*Photo: Gimpel fils*)

JANKEL ADLER — *Still Life* (Oil) 1948

(*Photo: Gimpel fils*)



JOHN MINTON — *Still Life* (Oil)

ROBERT ADAMS

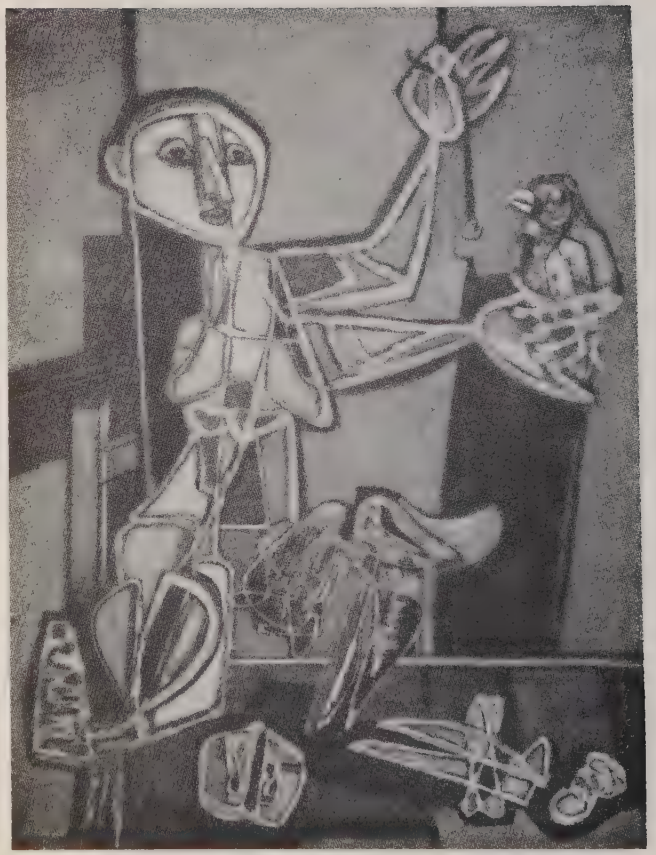
Bather (Elm 3′ 6″) 1948

JANKEL ADLER

Figures 1948

ROBERT COLQUHOUN — *Two Sisters* (Oil)

(*Messrs. Alex. Reid and Lefevre*)



JANKEL ADLER — *Woman with Parrot* 1944

tremulous equipoise, peg-top and double heads on long, tapering necks. Under it all ran a reflective melancholy.

Sometimes the bejewelled proliferation of colour and texture seemed to become ends in themselves. If, however, Adler luxuriated on occasions in the sensuous delights of picture-making, this very sophistication of technique was probably one of the things which caught the imagination of the student painters by whom he was soon surrounded. (It may be recalled that at this particular moment the Sutherland-Moore-Piper triumvirate were just reopening many eyes to textures of another sort, more often achieved with wax and crayon.)

The most obvious debt to Adler is owed by the young Scottish painters Colquhoun and MacBryde. (When Adler came to live in London in 1943, it was they who found him a studio in their block.) They in their turn have been regarded as at the core of the very loosely-knit group of younger neo-romantic painters—including Minton, Vaughan, Prunella Clough, Rosoman and the rest—who were the most marked movement to emerge from the war years. Sutherland alone, in this country, had employed with genuine understanding the methods of Picasso before the war, and had then applied them only to his paraphrases of nature. Adler offered a solution in rather similar terms to the problems posed by the human figure. Drawing from both these, the younger painters were able to create something that had no counterpart in any other country. The ripples of the idiom have now spread further out into society. One may see the shapes I have associated with Adler in a dozen different directions —in sculpture, in industrial design (furniture, door-handles, ceramics, exhibitions), in the new school of stained-glass designers that is arising. They are, as I have stated, part of the climate of today.

Jankel Adler was not, like the giants who came immediately before him, one of those who deflect the whole course of painting. If novelty for novelty's sake is still the cry, he is a very minor figure. If, however, the revolution that has taken place in this century turns out to have been not wholly destructive, if it truly holds within itself the foundations of a new art to come, then Adler will have his little niche in history, for he was one of the first who truly sought to build upon the ruins.

MORNING IN HOSPITAL

The night is languishing away.
The morning light leaks chill and grey
In the official corridors
And diagrams on waxen floors
(Where none the unbreathed perfection mars)
Monotonous designs of bars.

Lights in abstract soliloquy
Plays here a shining surgery
Till drilled with light the mind flees numb
Through halls of aluminium.
On the brain bright fears press
In the unliving loneliness.

Each within his scrupulous bed
Lies stoned in linen as if dead.

GEORGE MOOR

SARTRE AND CLAUDEL

Le Diable et le Bon Dieu
Partage de Midi

JOHN RUSSELL

THE production of Sartre's new play, *Le Diable et le Bon Dieu*, at the Théâtre Antoine, was the great event of last summer in Paris. The names of Louis Jouvet, Pierre Brasseur, Jean Vilar and Maria Casarès were imposing enough to satisfy even the most exigent author. The dimensions of the play (which runs for four hours and would have run for many more if the author had had his wish), the gravity of its subject, the rumours that Sartre, after his long public feud with Mauriac, had turned to attack the more redoubtable figure of Claudel—all these inflamed the expectations of an audience which was also presented by the management with some complicated statistics of mainly actuarial interest—such as that the play required the services of '104 technicians, who have already put in a total of 19,400 hours' work.' These preliminary labours, we were told, 'had been effected with love and devotion by a disciplined hive, in the sole interest of the public.'

The last buzzing of these disciplined bees could be heard not only before, but during, the opening performance of the play. Doubtless all goes more smoothly now: and mechanical smoothness is essential if an audience is not to be distracted from the remorselessly dialectical course of this mammoth piece. Sartre has himself charted this course in terms more appropriate to the Marathon runner than to normal dramatic practice. Of the eleven scenes, numbers 4, 5, and 6 offer 'a breathing-space in which the spectator can listen with one ear only.' The action is resumed in scene 7, reaches its highest point in scene 10, and returns at the close to the level of mere circumstance. 'I should like the spectator,' the author said later in an interview, 'to reserve all his powers of attention for scenes 8 to 11.'

In this peculiar design, Sartre is admirably served by his actors. Both Brasseur and Vilar rise without apparent fatigue to the Lear-like extravagances of scene 10. Groaning and grovelling in their dressing-gowns of brown hessian, the failed captain and the failed priest come splendidly to grips

with the main theme of the play. Here is Goetz von Berlichingen, the general turned evangelist, near the end of his fourth hour of travail upon the stage: 'Once,' he says, 'I violated the souls of the people by torture. Now I violate them by doing good... I betrayed everybody. I even betrayed my own brother, but my appetite for betrayal was still unsatisfied; and so one night, beneath the ramparts of Worms, I determined to betray Evil itself. That's the whole story. But Evil is not so easily betrayed: it was not Good that came out of the dice-box, but a magnified Evil.' It says a great deal for Brasseur that he presents us, to the very end of this gigantic historical charade, with the image of a great leader whose downfall is imaginatively true. From the moment when he first enters, accoutred with all the properties of a *Musée Militaire*, he has the mask and port of some rough giant of the Renaissance; and at the close, a battered old boar re-sharpening his blunted tusks, Brasseur still imparts a real magnificence to what, in the text, is merely a dialectical clothes-horse.

If Brasseur appears to the eye as one of Titian's princes, the ear accepts him as the hero of a Romantic melodrama of the 1840's. Transpose the rôle of Ruy Blas from the tenor to the bass register, and you will be near to the style in which this grandiose comedian addresses himself to the rare *morceaux de bravoure* with which his author has seasoned the text. This is, after all, a play in which incongruities of style are of no importance. Sited in theory in the Germany of the early sixteenth century, it soon takes off into an un-geographical aether in which fragments from Marx, Nietzsche, Savonarola, Pope Clement VII, St. John of the Cross and Odilon de Cluny meet as congruous elements of the intellectual alphabet of 1951. The hinge-point of the action (the scene, that is to say, in which Goetz, hitherto the glad votary of Evil, decides to experiment with Evil's opposite) is taken not from history but from Cervantes. As for the language, it varies between the rugose periods of an imagined antiquity and the abrupt and punitive language of Parisian debate. *Le Diable et le Bon Dieu* is a thesaurus of ideal rejoinders: the obsolete English concept of *le fairplay* has no place in the universe of Sartre, and M. Herbert Lüthy has very reasonably remarked that 'Sartre accomplishes the extraordinary feat of avoiding, in a play lasting four hours and set in the time of the Reformation, any mention, or even hint, of the existence of violent religious movements.' It is in the terms of the Soviet cinema that the clergy, bankers and other accessory villains are presented. The creation of character has never been Sartre's strong point, and in fact the only recognisable human being in the play is Goetz's mistress Catherine, the contemporary Sartrian dream-girl; the early supersession of this black-trousered foul-mouthed veteran of the sex-war must be accounted a misfortune. For the rest, there are two admirably-constructed theatrical scenes: the first, in which Goetz calls off the massacre of Worms; the second, in which he pretends to have drawn down upon himself the stigmata of Christ upon the cross. But although it is by blasphemy that Sartre exposes the nerve of his audience, it is not in blasphemy that the real interest of the play resides. Nor, one cannot help feeling, is it in the dialectic of Good and Evil that Sartre is most deeply committed. Ingenious the debates may be, and effective their theatrical presentation; but the arguments are by no means new, and if they succeed in maintaining a certain theatrical tension, the credit should be divided between the skill of the actors and the intellectual decrepitude of the audience. The real subject of the play must be sought in a dilemma which has little to do with the existence of God or the possibility of absolute good and absolute evil. (Sartre himself, in discussing the play, has said that 'the problem remains the same, whether God exists or not'.) Goetz's year-long experiment in virtue is a failure; but it is a failure in social relations, not in virtue. There is nothing virtuous in assuming certain of the outward forms of virtue; and when it all goes wrong, and Goetz is hated and despised where once he was hated and feared, all that he really regrets is that one way of living 'with the people and for the people' has not been successful. As M. Lüthy remarks in the luminous article to which I have already referred, the play is a bloated paraphrase of the dilemma of

the contemporary intellectual: 'Why is it impossible to speak to the people?' The people do not come well out of *Le Diable et le Bon Dieu*. They are shown, indeed, as being gullible, treacherous, ungrateful, dim-witted and craven. When they respond readily, it is to the strategic untruths of Nasty the revolutionary (a surname which will doubtless be revised in any English translation) or Tetzel the fraudulent priest. When they respond to Goetz, it is from fear and ignorance. In comparison with this sombre impeachment, *Saint Joan* is a masterpiece of rounded humanity and *Darkness at Noon* a monument of intellectual rectitude. The paradox, in fact, of its success in the theatre is that it is due very largely to one of the most insuperably likable of actors; and Brasseur's special gifts—the generous velvet of the voice, the exhilarating physical presence, the concentrated mischief of gait and eye—do not at all suggest the monster of intellectual calculation which lurks in the pages of *Les Temps Modernes*. I hope it will not seem ungrateful if I say that the most conspicuous thing about *Le Diable et le Bon Dieu*, once we are out of the theatre, is the eternal readiness of the intellectual to assume that his dilemmas are necessarily universal.

Sartre has denied that his intention was to write a profane counterpart of *Le Soulier de Satin*. 'It is no part of our literary tradition,' he said, 'to write *des anti-quelque chose*'. And he went on to say that 'the *Soulier de Satin* is much more offensive to the atheist, or the radical-socialist of the time at which it was written, than is *Le Diable et le Bon Dieu* to the Roman Catholic. But it is the Catholic, not the radical-socialist, who complained of the offence.' Well, Claudel is certainly a tremendous complainer, and he has one of the most purely antithetical minds in the history of literature. In controversy he has never trod the middle ground that divides an absolute Yea from an absolute Nay. Sartre's assertions are occasionally delivered with some simulacrum of fairness towards his adversary: Claudel's, never. 'Incomprehension,' he said as recently as 1947, 'is one of my attributes.' 'What would you?' he said, in the course of the same interview. 'It's *yes* or *no*.' 'And if it's yes *and* no?' 'Meaningless to me,' said the irritable old image-factory.

In itself, such an attitude would not seem to augur well for a playwright; and in fact there are many, many pages of Claudel's vast *œuvre* which tax the enthusiasm of even his keenest admirers. In the first decade of this century, when Claudel was at the height of his success as a proselyte, and hardly a week passed without the spectacular conversion of some rising literary figure, his methods were those of lightning aggression. 'Claudel tackled him about religion', we read of one harmless libertarian, 'took him to his room for an hour and gave him a most appalling talking-to. He came out in tears, a broken man, and left the house at once, saying to Jammes that his friend was really too cruel. Since then he has written to Claudel to ask for further information . . .' It is by a comparable brutality that Claudel imposes himself as a poet. Once launched upon the headlong Mississippi of the page, the reader is embarked willy-nilly upon an adventure such as few authors can offer. Monotonous as the flood may sometimes be (and disturbing the extraordinary collection of rubbish that it bears along with it), there is no mistaking the primitive power that drives it forward. Claudel in full spate is a force of Nature.

The absolute self-confidence, the disregard for taste or proportion, the unwearied oratory—all these traits in Claudel contribute to a general impression of irreducible largeness. *Partage de Midi* is at once the most private and the most accessible of his works: the most private, because it is largely autobiographical, and the most accessible, because for much of its length it retains many of the conventions of the well-made theatrical success. Only in Act III does it take off into regions where few will follow: Act I is a model of orthodox dramatic construction, and Act II, though filled with verbal cadenzas of the most vertiginous order, presents few difficulties to the audience in the theatre.

Partage de Midi is basically an analysis of the inadequacy of interested passion. Nineteenth-century romantic love is anathema to Claudel; from the beguiling

complex of erotic enjoyment he detaches the sad element of self-destruction. His main characters are broken in turn by the grand Wagnerian illusion of a love which claims to over-ride everything in heaven and everything on earth. (Rarely, one must add, have the initial charms of this illusion been more forcefully presented.) To the end of this chastening narrative Claudel has affixed a transformation scene which, given great acting and a certain insensitivity to the ridiculous, is one of the most remarkable dramatic feats since Ibsen wrote the final act of *Peer Gynt*. To the eye, it is like an illustration by Fantin-Latour to the last bars of *Tristan and Isolde*; to the ear, it affords the final convolutions of the great battle that has raged throughout the previous three hours: the battle between Image and Sense.

The language of *Le Diable et le Bon Dieu* is, as I have tried to indicate, more varied than that of Sartre's other works; but it is always the language of an intellectual. It functions at one level only—that of direct understanding. It could not be read, as Bossuet or Swift can be read, by those who are quite indifferent to the ideas which it expresses. The whole vast theory of implications, allusions, half-voluntary assonances—all the rich auxiliaries whom Claudel has at his service: these are quite absent. 'And a good thing too,' some might reply, as they construe the page on which Claudel's heroine is compared, inside a single sentence, to a rose, an acacia Farnesiana, a pheasant, the dawn, the green sea at first light, and a peacock in paradise. But they would be quite wrong; passages which, on the page, seem congested and overpowering, come off triumphantly in the swift traffic of the theatre. Claudel provides us a Brocéliande of imagery, an enchanted forest in which we can wander at whatever level most pleases our fancy; and for an actor there could be no greater test than the long boneless sentences in which fourteen adjectives combine to dog one solitary noun. The play demands great acting; given this initial lift—and what a lift it needs to be!—Claudel's characters attain to a superhuman resonance. There is a largeness and a generosity of feeling about *Partage de Midi* which Sartre has never displayed. Alembicated lust is the nearest he gets to love; and the affected sensibilities of Maria Casarès make Hilda, in *Le Diable et le Bon Dieu*, almost as ridiculous as Sheridan's Lady Tilburina. Claudel is the least economical of playwrights, and those who saw *Les Fausses Confidences* in London will know how remote he is from a writer like Marivaux, in whose hands the super-subtlety of French syntax reaches a point at which a displaced subjunctive affects the listener like a blow in the face. But the golden verbiage does its work—not, however, without some discomfiture for those who had prepared themselves for the evening by study of the printed text. For two versions exist: the original text, and the stage-version which Claudel prepared for the first production of the play in December 1948. In London, however—in deference, no doubt, to English sporting instincts—neither one nor the other was followed consistently, and the conscientious student was faced with a task of instantaneous collation such as would tax the coolest head. And—here is the point—heads were not cool in the St. James's Theatre. Heads were steam-heated, beyond a doubt. Heads were spun, and turned, and altogether unsteadied by Mademoiselle Edwige Feuillère's performance. The rôle of Ysé in *Partage de Midi* is as long and arduous as any in the repertory. One false move, one lapse of attention, one failure of intonation or stress, and the heightened language of the play becomes ridiculous. The rôle comprises, too, the extremes of feeling and deportment. Ysé must be able to put out her tongue, to imitate a horse, and yet to conduct herself with the glancing graces of high comedy. In the second act she must sustain the long speeches—probably the most testing *tirades* of the last two hundred years—and yet restrict herself to an almost Japanese formality of movement. And in the third act she must pass with hardly a pause from conventional melodrama to the starlit Apotheosis. Mademoiselle Feuillère's conquest of these hazards was never in question. From the first moment, when she came into view, an animated Helleu costumed by Bérard, she was in command. How was it done? By the voice, above all

—the voice now rich and soft as avocado meat, now swift and penetrating as Ahab's harpoon. It was not a question of individual phrases or speeches being beautifully spoken. It was not even that there was the rarest sense of complete and easy communication. It was simply that this very long part, with its incongruities, its abrupt changes of accent and direction, its inequalities and its truly horrific opportunities for failure and absurdity, was endowed with the organic rhythms of a work of art. There was at every moment that security in the face of hazard which is the one sure mark of the great performer. Almost any good actress could play Ysé as a fatal beauty and make some sort of impression; but it was the prime triumph of this performance that, even at the most explicitly carnal moments of the play, we were reminded that it was on the Mount of Olives, as much as on the Mount of Venus, that the hero's Agony was taking place. Olivet as much as Venusberg—that was the problem, and Mademoiselle Feuillère solved it. She might have been tempted, too, to impose upon the character a unity that is not in the text; this she never did. Ysé remained perfectly unpredictable. And so it was that no two moments in the play were alike. Ysé could break off a conversation in order to stand against the wall, with her back to the audience, her Edwardian frills and laces set in the likeness of Greek sculpture; with a drag of the right foot, or a great loop of her knitting-needle, or a tilt of her rocking-chair, Mademoiselle Feuillère achieved just those changes of tone for which the text, despite its enormous length, does not completely provide.

In all this she was supported with perfect unselfishness by three accomplished actors whom it is a pleasure to name: Jean-Louis Barrault, Jean Servais, and Jacques Dacqmine. The whole performance, like that of *Le Diable et le Bon Dieu*, was at once a delight and an exasperation to those who deplore the unreadiness of our best English writers to write for the stage. Brasseur, like some monster from the jungle; Mademoiselle Feuillère, like a great city in flames—these are sights to tempt any author of spirit to that most daunting of exercises: the creation of superhuman characters. The great line that ran from Sophocles and Shakespeare and Racine to Stendhal's Sanseverina and Hardy's Lucretia Vyse has quite died out. Who will first re-animate it?

Meanwhile, these two prodigious artists have stirred, in one spectator at least, the latest of a lifelong series of ideal playbills. This is how it runs:

EDWIGE FEUILLÈRE
et
PIERRE BRASSEUR
dans
ANTOINE ET CLEOPATRE
de
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Another Language

A naked child, the lamb, the whippet
and the cockerel with a tipsy crown
were my companions in the barnyard
growing green
and friends enough for anyone.

The lamb is dead,
the whippet never left his trap,
the cockerel abdicated
and the child became an idiot;
the world is over
and we need new words
before we dare to speak of it again.

PHILIP OAKES

Letter from Paris

PIERRE SEGHERS

CAN one talk of the new season in January? October is so far back that the chestnut leaves have faded and fallen twice already. The pools that Corot painted among the hills of Ville-d'Avray are frozen over; the Bois-de-Boulogne is deserted and the shrubberies of Vincennes are black. *The cold and lucid winter* has encircled Paris with knives. However, at the Theatre of Arts and Letters the non-stop show goes on. Therefore one *can* always talk of the 'new season', since the old one never really came to an end.

There is no winter and no more autumn for the stars of the revolving stage, omnipresent, indefatigable, always there. In these times of upheaval one might have thought that those who were enjoying their last rest would give us time to miss them (Rest in peace . . . and let us do so too).

But no. Benjamin Constant suddenly appears again in the house of Gallimard with *Cécile*, to rejoice the hearts of strong-minded women, and at the same time Marcel Proust makes a distinguished reappearance in *Figaro* with *Jean Santeuil*, which gives *Figaro* a very 1900-ish air (if it ever lost it). The critics, who a few weeks later were to exert themselves in distinguishing the true from the false in the vanity fair of literary prizes, emphasised the importance of these two posthumous works. The living prisoners were given the benefit of the doubt; the really successful parties were the illustrious dead who had time on their side.

Among the young novelists, the 'toughs', *La Condition Humaine* comes to life again with a *série noire*; adventure, revolt, the non-importance of living come to us with the books of Michel Morht, Georges Arnaud, Jean Hougron and Roger Vaillant, while after *Le Jour des Rois* by Véronique Blaise, the fairy-tale novel brings us this year a legend signed by Anne de Tourville, *Jabadao*, which reveals a true writer. Other men of letters, still younger than Benjamin Constant and Marcel Proust, reveal nothing; they remain true to their own character—even when they are dead.

Literature—that is, the literature of a charming but deformed and obsolete society—has opened some secret cupboards; rather like the Devil, faithful to his black cloak and his Mephistophelian elegance, a great man rises again from his tomb as though from a poem by Richepin; André Gide publishes his intimate journal *Et nunc manet in te*. Everything is there—conjugal love and sexual perversion, fine style and monumental selfishness, cruelty and the search for a noble attitude, despair and all the flavour of moral assassination, the complexity and the monolithic personality, the most artificial being and the most human drama, all that Gide had kept silent throughout his life—it is all there. The little domestic quarrels of M. Jouhandeau and Elise are a long way off. (Incidentally, if you want to explain the relative success of M. Jouhandeau, you must not say, 'What a writer!' but, 'He does not get on with his wife.' In the same way, if you want to approach M. Jean Paulhan, who has just published a charming book, *Petite Préface à toute Critique*, rather than say, 'He has talent', it would be more to the point to say, 'A *couturier* of rhetoric'. It is one of the games of the season, called, of course, consequences.)

For Paris is playing a game. Not only in publishers' offices but still more so in the most serious, not to say the most official, of settings. Paris plays at opulence while the franc goes down. It plays at building a palace for UNO while reconstruction is stopped for lack of money: plays with military headquarters without enough soldiers, and gambles on the piastre while Indo-China goes rotten. In the corridors of the Bourse, the temple of the last Faith, you can see the 'Shanghai Tramways' surreptitiously laying down lines in the

forests of the Congo, the rubber trees of Indo-China bleeding in the Cameroons, and the mining companies of Doc-Lap boring their shafts in the heart of Oubangui. It is a game, a dance, a quadrille of hard and soft currencies going through the motions of prudence and recession. To a background of bugles—if M. Mauriac was a poet we might have had a new Déroulède—can be heard odd phrases: 'We will fight to the last ditch. That's why I have re-invested everything in Morocco . . .'

It is a curious game, if it were not heart-breaking for those who know the rules, a mixture of politics and business. Even literature does not escape. The big publishers are buying up chains of bookshops in Africa; the big firms are dividing up as they did before, half-Vichy, half-London; the chips are down, *rien ne va plus.*

On the press side we see M. Beuve-Méry, director of the greatest French paper, *Le Monde,* dismissed for being 'neutral', as M. Claude Bourdet in his time was dismissed from *Combat.* The independent press is dead. The *Observateur* is only a subdued deputy referee on the touch-line every week, while *Match* absorbs and excites the public.

On the literary side, M. Albert Camus publishes *L'homme révolté,* a long essay on the status of murder. Metaphysical, historical and artistic rebellion, individual and State terrorism, both irrational and rational, a logical analysis of nihilism, murder, and the aftermath of absurdity are here described with the pride and severity that we associate with the author of the *Mythe de Sisyphe.* But what is the point of it? What practical application can it have? Great minds which cannot be bothered with small material details or the actual instruments of torture of the world will find in this book a thousand pretexts for rejoicing—intellectually. Amongst those who have possessions (those who are glad to have them and those who feel guilty about them) it is easier and more useful to take up intellectual positions than to act like men. A position cannot compromise you; it is only a hobby. On this subject a young Catholic writer, Marc Beigbeder, has recently written a pamphlet *Lettre à Esprit sur l'esprit de corps et la contrainte par corps,* in which he puts all the important questions to people who do not wish to do more than be the arbitrators of our times.

But the warnings, the reflections and the positions of even the most lucid intellectuals are only the scratchings of dry pens. Anyone who is honest can see how the game is going to end—when the last card is down, the police will break it up, or open fire.

It is all too sad to be true; Paris, in fact, refuses to believe it. Paris wants to think of other things. As a result of the great influence of the cinema on books, the public now prefers entertainment to reading; so one astute publisher has brought out, in quick succession, two admirable, illustrated albums. In one of them, *Paris des Rêves,* thirty poets try to echo photographs taken by Izis during the Occupation, showing a Paris which is unforgettably silent and nostalgic. The other, *Le grand Bal du Printemps,* also by Izis, is no less fascinating. Prévert the poet, sensitive and popular, teasing and tender, green and living like a tuft of grass between the paving-stones, enhances the book with his new poems and songs.

And in order not to believe it, what could Paris invent better than its songs? After the success of the jitterbug clubs in the cellars of Saint-Germain-des-Prés came a rage for the *café-concerts.* Never has Paris had so many cabarets, little theatres, and stages hidden underground or cramped in narrow passages at the back of courtyards. Here poetry undergoes the influence of the radio and the stage. The poet comes nearer to his public. Sometimes he works with musicians (the Prévert-Kosma partnership should not be taken as typical; Kosma could set the telephone directory to music all by himself) and the good old times of Aristide Bruant and the *Chat Noir* have come back. Alongside the music halls, the big exotic night-clubs, the free and easy or lurid dives, some cabarets remain in the really French tradition.

As poets, on the radio and in the cabarets, Francis Carco and Pierre Mac Orlan remember their youth. At Montmartre you can sip cherries in brandy and muse over the hey-day of the *Lapin Agile.* Mac Orlan, who is receiving the real praise that his work deserves, writes some excellent songs for Germaine Montero about sailors, girls and sea-ports. You can hear them in

the Avenue de L'Opéra while you dine at 4,000 francs a head. In the same programme, Mouloudji, who was discovered by Jean-Paul Sartre, adds to his talents as a novelist a real talent for fantasy which is suddenly tragic when he recites *Le Voleur*, a poem inspired by a real living thief who exists and whom everyone knows, since he is one of the most successful authors of the moment. Here and there you can hear the Frères Jacques, that international and irresistible group, Yves Robert, the compère of the excellent *Rose Rouge*, Grenier-Hussenot, unrivalled in his comic sketches, and Michel de Ré—all of them brilliant indicator lights in the nocturnal literary life of Paris.

At Carrère's or Bobino's in Montparnasse, Mademoiselle Juliette Greco remains the ideal interpreter of Queneau, Prévert and Desnos; with her low voice and all gestures kept purposely as simple as possible, she represents equally well the poetry conveyed by the mystery of words and the malice which gleams on their surface. And Mademoiselle Suzanne Girard, on a minute stage in the Rue du Père Corentin, really brings Bruant back to life, as well as the admirable and forgotten peasant poet, Gaston Couté. One song composed in collaboration with Georges Arnaud, the young author of *Le Salaire de la Peur*, is among those which tells in a few words better than all the books written about youth by men old enough to be grandfathers, the drama of a betrayed generation which is quick to fight and knows itself condemned to death, a generation without faith.

But these songs are sometimes dangerous; they might lead people to start thinking. Yves Montand, a really great artist, can make whole audiences rise to their feet and clap when he says, better than anyone will ever say it, 'What stupidity, the war!', this cry which Prévert nails into the heart of his poem *Barbara*; but all the same, it is none the less true that Paris prefers to forget, to forget everything down to its very existence, down to language itself. After Fargue, Henri Michaux, Queneau and René Daumal (everyone uses them but who will admit it?), M. Jean Tardieu serves us up in the Quartier-Latin a rehash of confused vowels, neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring: a show of literary tricks for the fashionable set. It is very diverting, no doubt, rather drawing-roomish, caricature-like, and acrobatic. But what will remain after these shreds of dead words? All this and the musical comedy in slang by Pierre Devaux and Georges Van Paris, played by Barbara Laage, is perhaps irresistibly funny. So funny that you laugh your head off. And then what?

Of course there is less laughter at the Palais de la Mutualité. The public is rather different. There it is the crowded public of Paris workmen, artisans and clerks, a Paris which is never mentioned by the literary critics. While there are shows for *chic* people, what is the point of mentioning any others? At the Palais de la Mutualité the house is full, and the two or three thousand people have not come in cars or taxis but by the *Métro*, or on foot. At the Palais they are showing a play by Henri Bassis and Kosma, based on the drama of *La Commune de Paris*, and all at once when you hear this crowd of people break into applause, when you hear the heartbeats of all these anonymous Parisians who make Paris, who are Paris, then you feel there is something else in the air besides stylistic controversies.

Something else, which is very different from the lily-of-the-valley of literature, something nearer, it seems, to the two thousand years which made up Paris, something permanent which is less superficial, which remembers its history and would be worthy of it.

In Paris, in 1952, among the new arrivals and the next emigrants, between the crowd who try to understand and the jugglers who hope to forget, between those who have everything to gain and those who have everything to lose, there are a few exemplary men whom time has preserved; thus, in the centre of the gossip of the town but rising above it, in his modest flat in the Rue Sainte-Geneviève, lives the most illustrious of our professors, the man who teaches the philosophy of the history of sciences at the Sorbonne, the author of *L'eau et les Rêves*, *L'Air et les Songes*, *La Terre et les Rêveries de la Volonté*—M. Gaston Bachelard, the great figure who is as noble as he is retiring, and who dominates poetry

and contemporary thought in France today. He receives young poets, writes to them and quotes them in his lectures. What a long way it is from this humanity, this white-haired presence to the automaton behaviour of M. Paul Léautaud, a man of letters and back-stage work, who is as dry and malicious as a belated actor.

Literary Paris is Paul Eluard, who has just thrown new light over the whole of French poetry from the twelfth to the seventeenth century through his *First Living Anthology of the Poetry of the Past*. At the same time literary Paris is *La Belle Jeunesse*, an anthology of young writers who are really only twenty years old. All this, even in the climate of anxiety, is very satisfying. The apologia for nothingness, and Jean-Paul Sartre, are both hanging fire.

BILL OF SALE

ARTHUR POWER

. . . 'Also to be auctioned on the fourteenth day
Is 74 Pellwood Avenue by Peter Hale,
A four-storied red brick house
With walled-in gardens, and twelve fine rooms
A garage at the back
And a stone-stepped path all the way' . . .

And high above cut into the vapour-tasselled sky
Is a lead-roofed attic light
Where years three times three and more
I crept up those creaking stairs
To push open her unlocked door
Where she lay motionless
. . . Torment of Time: not salesman's hammer blow
Cannot efface the wheel of stars
That moved across that attic pane
Or the soul's surrender which took place
Upon the golden splendour of that night,
And even though she held me back
And turned her mouth away
Pummelling with her fists against my chest
Uncertain of my heart's true sway . . .

. . . Yet still I remember
In the cold and stupid hours
Which now make up my total day
That draft of heavenly wine I drew
From her lips in that four-storied red-brick house
With a walled-in garden and twelve fine rooms
And stone-stepped path all the way
At 74 Pellwood Avenue
Now to be auctioned by Peter Hale
On this the fourteenth day.

A Short Story

CHRISTMAS NEAR MOSCOW

NIKA HULTON

'WHO will be Father Frost tonight?' asked Anna Petrovna, lifting her plump white arm in order to pour herself a fourth cup of tea from the samovar. 'I wonder who?', she continued gaily and playfully, while her tiny brown eyes, as round as those of a partridge, sternly surveyed her husband, General Alexei Ivanovitch Proutkine, and her companion, Mademoiselle Georgette Daru, on the morning of Christmas Eve, 1910. They were all partaking of a lavish breakfast at *Marinoye*, the Proutkines' country estate a hundred versts south of Moscow.

At these words the General's mouth contracted at the corners, just as it did on parade, while Mademoiselle Daru dropped her spoon on to her saucer, breaking it in two.

'How fortunate you are, little Daru,' said Anna Petrovna, her bird's eyes blazing with anger, 'how fortunate you are that I do not cherish my earthly possessions! Otherwise, thrown as you are on our generosity, your kind heart would no doubt suffer for the somewhat awkward movements you cannot help making! But, be of good cheer', she continued in the ominous voice so well known to her household, 'I shall not ask you to impersonate Father Frost, as it is not my habit to demand favours from someone so dependent on us. The left hand should not know what the right one does. Is it not so, Alexis? The choice therefore rests between you and myself.'

'Annette,' answered the General, having carefully wiped the parched corners of his mouth, 'nothing would give me greater pleasure than to oblige you, as I have done many a time, and be the protagonist of one of the excellent French poems you write every year for this occasion. But unfortunately, as you know, my pronunciation is not of the best, which might give rise to a rumour that my parents were unable to engage a French tutor in my youth.'

'Would they think so indeed?' said Anna Petrovna thoughtfully. 'Well, let them!' she continued bravely, with a wave of her small white hand. 'Was He not also starved, and crowned with thorns, insulted, dragged in the mud? Besides,' she mused, 'your youth is so far behind now that you may well have forgotten all the nuances of the language, engaged, as you were, in the service of the Emperor.'

'I have been on many parades, it is true,' answered the General. 'As for my youth, it is not much further behind than . . . '

'Very well! very well!!' interrupted Anna Petrovna with such gusto that a partial denture she wore at the back of her mouth became loose. 'I can well see that, unlike Him, you do not want to let the children, and the old, come unto you to receive these presents which I have been wrapping up for the last two weeks.'

'Please do not always compare me to Him,' begged the General. 'It is flattering, but embarrassing. However, I do not see why, with your talent for acting, you do not undertake the rôle yourself and, with your faultless pronunciation, recite the French poem you have been composing with such care.'

'Alexei Ivanovitch', replied Anna Petrovna with great dignity, 'you seem to forget that I am not one to display my talents with such lack of modesty. No. This poem, which is probably the best I have ever written, will join the manuscripts in my casket, which await my death to be made known to the world. And it may not be long now before . . . '

'No, no, my benefactress! No! Do not say that!' cried Mademoiselle Daru, her voice vibrant as the strings of a harp. With a dramatic movement she knelt on a cushion in front of her mistress in an attitude of distress.

'*Courage donc! Courage donc!*' murmured Anna Petrovna patting her head like a dog. The scene had such pathos that

Masha, the maid, who came in at that moment bringing some meat pasties, stopped in the doorway, crossed herself and said 'God the Father and all His Saints have mercy upon us!' Even the General took out his eye-glass, blew on it and wiped it with his handkerchief, his mouth puckering into an almost invisible 'O'.

During this time Anna Petrovna was tapping on the floor with her small fat foot which was encased in a cloth-uppered laced boot—a sign that she was thinking.

Her thoughts were of a bitter nature. She had herself instituted the ceremonial, unusual in Russia, of Father Frost, or Père Noël, as she often called him, appearing after dinner on Christmas Eve. This was done for two reasons: she had been left the outfit by a distant foreign relative, whilst her nature disliked waste of any kind, and it was the best way of making known to the neighbourhood her talent for composing French poetry. This talent was of an unusual kind; for, instead of speaking of passion and its pitfalls, like other poets, she spoke of a love of a higher kind which scorned this world and its inhabitants and, leaping far beyond the hierarchy of angels and archangels, soared up to Him. She was a religious poet. Being such, she believed that her verse could only be recited on religious feast-days. True, there was Easter, and other such occasions. Yet none of these afforded such a perfect set of circumstances as Christmas, blending as it did the mysterious, the profound, the mystical and the flippant. It gave her poems a *je ne sais quoi* which, she imagined, must be so greatly appreciated in the provinces.

The procedure was usually as follows. Father Frost, dressed in conventional plum-coloured attire, with a false beard, hired from *Hector's*, the best wig-maker in Moscow, glued to his chin, and shod with Anna Petrovna's uncle's riding boots, from Maxwell of London, would arrive carrying a basket on his back, whilst a hand-bell simulated sleigh-bells. He would distribute little presents, carefully wrapped up, to the guests and the servants. The General's old nannie would receive a rattle, and Herr Schmidt, the doctor, a parasol. The guests, full of a five-course dinner, would joke amiably, teasing each other in the manner so dear to the aristocracy. The Christmas Tree, lit with candles, and decorated with home-made paper chains, with the fat fairy perched on top (it was Anna Petrovna's first doll—for, as she was wont to say, she still had a little girl's soul) would stand in a corner of the drawing-room. At such times both Anna Petrovna and Mademoiselle Daru would be their most girlish selves. Yet while the companion would allow Dr. Schmidt to call her 'Frou-frou' and kiss her on the nape of her neck, Anna Petrovna would sound a graver note, by discussing the discrepancy between dogma and true faith. It must be confessed that this topic soon degenerated into a conversation on self-mortification, or, in other words, diet, and finally into a discussion of her weight, which in the last few years had become a problem.

During this time the General, who, needless to say, would be concealed under the garb of Father Frost, would mentally rehearse for the last time the very long poem composed by his wife; for he knew quite well that while conversing with her guests, she would be watching him intently with her bird-like eyes. This was because, although he had taken the trouble to practise his vowels in front of a mirror when shaving, his French accent was still at fault. Last year he had pronounced all his 'u's as oo's' and his 'r's' had rolled like a German drum. This had irritated Anna Petrovna, who had tried to catch his eye and, by intensive lip movement, endeavoured to convey to him the faultless French pronunciation of which she was so proud. This humming—for she could not keep her lips entirely silent—had nearly put him off. He had, however, not dared to say so. Nevertheless, through him the long poem, in which she had expressed her childlike love of humanity and the melancholy longing for the next world, so typical of the Russian Soul, had become known to the neighbourhood.

Woe to those who dared to cough or to sneeze during the recital! Once, after a long wait, Nannie had blown her nose. Never had the poor soul been allowed to forget the incident. She was pursued for the next seven years by Anna Petrovna's revenge, which took the form of depriving her of tea.

After the recital, when the false beard from *Hector's* was becoming unsafe on account of the perspiration gathering on the General's chin, the company would burst out into loud cheers and clappings. *Charmant! Charmant!* Mademoiselle Daru would whisper to Dr. Schmidt, while the physician, caressing her elbow, would be heard to ejaculate 'Ach! what talent, what depth, what truth!'

'Author! Author!' the guests would cry. 'We want the poet or the poetess—the Lamartine—the George Sand!'

'No, no, the Bossuet!' Mademoiselle Daru would insist.

At last the great moment would come. Clad in mauve from head to foot, a turban with a white aigrette on her brow, which made her resemble the Shah of Persia, Anna Petrovna would modestly move to the centre of the room, now vacated by the General. Eyes raised to heaven—but not too much, so as not to expose her double chin—she would wave her small fat hand as though repudiating the fame. 'No, no,' she would say; 'the poetess—or maybe the poet—wants to remain anonymous. *She* wants,' she would continue, dwelling on the *she*, 'to offer this modest poem to Him, our star, our guide, to Him who sees all—the great, and especially the small, and not only what they do but also what they think!' She would continue thus, looking intently at Mademoiselle Daru and at Nannie.

Her cheeks the colour of her turban, her fat neck pulsating, she would remain for an instant poised as if in ecstasy. Then, with a girlish giggle, she would break the tension and hop childishly back to her armchair.

At this moment Mademoiselle Daru would take out her handkerchief and putting it to her eyes, cry, 'I weep, I weep!', to which her mistress would respond 'Child, control yourself!'

'Thank you, our benefactress,' the servants would exclaim, headed by Nannie. 'God bless you, our protectress!'

'There is a particle of God even in these little people,' Anna Petrovna would whisper to the doctor. For she believed in mixing the flippant with the profound. 'It is so,' the doctor would answer.

'Alexis, mon cher, where have you been all this time?' Anna Petrovna would then demand playfully on seeing the General return in his usual attire. 'Oh, wicked, wicked boy, working again on plans for your Emperor!' she would continue, with a heavy wink at her guests.

This scene, or one of approximately the same nature, was repeated every year. Can it be possible that this year, through the General's jealousy (for what else could it be but jealousy since he was not a poet?), her poem, in which she had poured out her soul and added a philosophical dissertation on Death, was to remain unheard? 'It cannot be,' she determined. 'I have no right to deprive my people of greatness! A compromise must be reached!' Alas! reaching a compromise was not easy.

Indeed, if, as the General had suggested, she was herself to impersonate Father Frost, her triumphal scene at the end would be entirely ruined. Easy as it was to take up a modest, yet noble, attitude in a mauve dress straight from the best couturier of Moscow, it would be impossible to go through the same motions with a beard, and with a basket on her back.

To force the General to reconsider his decision would present no difficulty, in theory. For a mere hint that her health would suffer through his cruelty (which meant that he would have to endure her moans for a couple of years or more) was a powerful weapon in Anna Petrovna's hands. Yet she was loath to use it. In spite of his conventional ways, Alexei Ivanovitch was subject to uncontrollable moods which usually followed upon an encounter with his wife, especially after the lady had forced him to adopt a course opposed to his own views. These moods which, he assured her, were entirely outside his own will, would always have for object (no doubt it was a coincidence) to embarrass Anna Petrovna in the most painful manner. Had he not once, after a conflict, and through absent-mindedness, revealed to a drawing-room full of Muscovite society ladies, her age and her waist measurement, two closely-guarded secrets?

He could, for instance, if forced into Father Frost's attire, conveniently forget a few lines of the poem and replace them by words of his own invention. The thought of

it sent a shudder through Anna Petrovna's large frame. Not even a decade of her constant moaning could be a fit revenge, and certainly nothing could ever wipe out the disgrace! If the General were to assume his usual rôle, it could be only at his own most urgent request.

The other alternative worth investigating was Mademoiselle Daru. Yet Anna Petrovna knew that it would not be easy to get the companion into Father Frost's garments. For five years the thirty-nine-year-old spinster had been trying to enslave Dr. Carl Gustavovitch Schmidt without any definite success; for the physician, aged over sixty, was of a cautious nature and a tepid disposition. However, after many rustic pursuits, such as picnics in spring and mushroom-picking in autumn, they had arrived at a stage of tender whisperings and 'animal' pet-names. He would call her 'My little white mouse'. She would coyly answer 'My great big You'. The moment was ripe; and the companion hoped that, in the festive atmosphere of Russian Christmas, his Baltic heart would melt, and he would at last utter the expected words.

It must be said that Anna Petrovna had been the guiding star as well as the chief planner of the whole romance. Not only did she love giving advice; she was sure that the physician's attentions were directed to Mademoiselle Daru only because she herself was not, alas, available. The matter also gave her ample opportunity to inflict on her companion a kind of torture of which she had become a past master. 'Little Daru,' she would say, 'how sad it is that with your romantic disposition you do not find it necessary to give more attention to your appearance. Your wardrobe is too modest. You have not yet understood,' she would go on, overlooking her companion's poverty and minute salary, 'you have not yet understood the importance of headgear.' 'A turban,' she would muse, 'would hide many of these fine wrinkles which have so prematurely gathered on your brow. It would also disguise that your hair is scanty and of a poor quality. Ah, how lucky you are to be loved for your soul! Think of me, always pursued by the desires of men like a deer in a forest! Ah! could I but escape the pitfalls of beauty! . . . Has Carl Gustavovitch proposed yet? Well, do not grieve. Your destiny is, perhaps, of a more solitary and saintly nature.'

'Now let us be girlish!' she would exclaim, fluffing up her thick coarse hair, 'and let us see how your homely face would look under some of my turbans.'

A long time would follow, during which Anna Petrovna's turbans, of which there were two, one mauve and one *bois de rose*, would be lifted out of her wardrobe to be placed upon Mademoiselle Daru's tiny head. Looking like the ailing heir of a Hindu principality, the companion would straighten her wizened neck and set her bloodless lips in a Mona Lisa smile. She agreed that, with this headgear, which topped her frame like a cabbage on its stalk, her appearance underwent a change for the better. Her dignity was enhanced, and the danger of her dry scalp showing through her tight and orderly curls was averted. The failure to possess a turban was the only obstacle that stood between her and happiness, or at least security, with Carl Gustavovitch.

She began a harrying battle against Anna Petrovna, in order to secure the gift, or at least the loan, of one of the turbans. Although personally she preferred the mauve one, she soon concentrated her attacks on the *bois de rose*, for fear of losing both—this owing to a remark made by Anna Petrovna during one of these fittings. 'You have too little bloom, Daru,' the latter had said, 'for this pastel shade. People would say that I starve you, when in fact your appetite is as amply satisfied as Nannie's. No, no, *bois de rose*, or "flesh", as they say abroad, is the only soft shade which would enhance your dull complexion —that is, if my kind heart would make me agree to lend it to you one morning when we are alone.'

In spite of all these setbacks, Mademoiselle Daru used, one day, a frontal attack to which Anna Petrovna was not accustomed, and so won the battle; for she received a definite promise that the turban would be hers for one afternoon, and at least part of an evening—the date as yet unnamed. Anna Petrovna had surrendered

in a most dramatic way. 'Ach, take, take everything,' she had exclaimed, 'my land, my house, my horses! Leave me only my integrity! You will be sure, will you not, to wipe all the remains of powder from the lining, as it eats into the silk?'

'Frivolity, frivolity!' she had added. 'If it were not that I needed this greedy and strong Dasha to lace my cruel corsets, I should retire into the wilderness and like Him live on a handful of dates.'

Although it was, alas, only a promise, Mademoiselle decided, against her better judgment, to take the plunge and invest her savings in a *bois de rose* evening dress. It was a major undertaking for, apart from the expense, the colour had to be matched from memory. For woe to her if, by borrowing the turban, her mistress were to be given an inkling of the temerity of her plans. Her free time would be cruelly curtailed at once, and the reading aloud to her mistress of French novelettes, by which Anna Petrovna measured the degradation of the modern world, would become a regular duty. Secrecy must be complete. The work was done at night by candlelight, and dawn would find her bending over a hem or giving a last touch to a frill. After three months of this labour, the 'flesh' evening dress in cheap silk was at last finished, and hung, shrouded in tissue paper, in her little wardrobe. Had the coveted turban been already in her possession, instead of sitting, like the crown of Holy Russia proudly in Anna Petrovna's hat box, Mademoiselle Daru would have been spared these sick headaches and attacks of asthma which her mistress was wont to describe as 'wind' in front of her husband and the ageing physician. For the companion knew that, although the lady's promises were sometimes generous (if extracted at all), their execution was often part of a complicated barter in which the companion was always the loser. Still, if necessary, she was ready for a new fight. 'One cannot have everything,' she often thought, looking at the photograph of Carl Gustavovitch riding a donkey on a beach in the Crimea.

No wonder that, with all her hopes so nearly shattered (for tonight was the night when, clad in *bois de rose* from head to foot, she was to make the final attempt to overcome the doctor's prudence), and feeling that a new war was about to start, for which she was not yet properly equipped, the companion had dropped a spoon on one of her mistress's favourite saucers.

Meanwhile these few minutes, however irksome to the General, and especially to Mademoiselle Daru, who had to remain motionless in an attitude of prayer, had been of great use to Anna Petrovna, who had time to reminisce in comfort and to adjust her plan of battle. Helped by the certainty not only that she was right but also that she was rendering a great service to humanity, it was not difficult for her to decide that, although Mademoiselle Daru would make but a puny Father Frost and that a lighter basket must be found, it was imperative that she should assume this rôle. True, the dramatic sigh which usually shook the companion's small brown-clad frame, trembling with ecstasy at the recital of the poem, would be lost by this arrangement and, in addition, she would have to forego the contrasting effect of her own full 'arrogant' beauty with Mademoiselle Daru's wizened appearance. On the other hand, she only skipped lightly over the fact that the companion's perfect Touraine accent would lighten the *Ochs* and *Achs* which were frequent in Anna Petrovna's poems.

Yet she was used to suffering. 'It must be, it must! I must sacrifice myself as usual,' she whispered to herself, while her small mouth became almost invisible. 'Daru,' she said, 'do not grieve. Death comes to everyone, but there is still life in this weak body. And He needs me in this world. Now let your kind heart speak, do not restrain yourself out of modesty. Yes, you can and you shall be Father Frost tonight!'

At these words Mademoiselle Daru's head, which had supported her mistress's heavy hand during all these meditations, was suddenly drawn in, as a tortoise's head recedes into its shell.

'My benefactress,' she whispered. 'You have understood my feelings but, alas, how could you allow me to do such a thing? Tonight is the night which will decide my destiny. Carl Gustavovitch has already warned me that he wishes for a serious *entretien* with me. How could I answer the

"yes" which will no doubt be asked of me with this admirable but extensive beard on my face? On the other hand, think of me wearing the turban which you have so generously offered to lend me, leaning on his strong arm, a pale reflection of yourself (since I shall be wearing your headdress)', she insisted pointedly. 'No, you must allow me to decline your kind offer. Bless me, my benefactress. Let me, oh, let me leave your house a bride!'

Taken aback by this subtle counter-attack, Anna Petrovna decided that her response must be swift. She was not at all pleased with this turn of events. She had condoned the courtship, but she had no intention of allowing a marriage. She had kept Mademoiselle Daru for seventeen years and, although her wages were small, letting her go would be a severe loss. She felt deeply injured, and a wave of self-pity swelled her large heart, not only for herself but for Carl Gustavovitch who, though naturally in love with her, had had to content himself with her companion.

Nevertheless, she did not waste time on sentimentality. It was doubly important that the companion should undertake the rôle of Father Frost now that marriage was projected. Indeed, this second reason had now become the dominant one. To be her most effective self, Anna Petrovna assumed the facial expression she used in order to show that she was being taken advantage of, and was also deeply wounded. 'Mademoiselle,' she said in a throaty contralto, moving up her small mouth under her aquiline nose, 'I did not know that such things were going on under my roof. How dared you? Yes! How dared you behave in such a loose manner?'

'But Anna Petrovna, did you not encourage me, and even give me advice, not only in demeanour but also about clothes? Did you not say that my appearance would be improved by a turban (although, naturally, I could never attain your perfection of beauty)? Owing to your faultless judgment, I have even invested in some expensive material so as to match the turban so generously offered. A dress is ready for your inspection.'

'I have kept this a secret,' she continued, 'because, knowing your kindness, I felt that you would offer to pay for it. That I could never accept. So, wearing this dress, which could have been another proof of your kindness, and your turban on my head, I may . . .'

'Turban!' cried Anna Petrovna, pretending to overlook the information about the dress, but still more determined that Mademoiselle Daru should be saved against her own will. 'She talks of turbans when the honour of my house is at stake! Tell me, what did he do to you?'

'He kissed me behind the ear,' whispered the companion.

'And what else?' asked Anna Petrovna in a strangled voice.

'He . . .'

'Stop, stop' cried the lady. 'I am a married woman, but not a cocotte.'

'A cocotte,' cried the companion. 'Me—a cocotte! What would my aunts say if they heard this?'

'What did he do to you? What? What? What?' demanded the General who had remained silent until now, pinching her above her left kidney, while two red lines appeared under his eyes.

'Alexis,' cried Anna Petrovna, 'you are not amongst the Corps de Ballet but in a gentlewoman's house!'

At this moment Toby, Anna Petrovna's aged fox-terrier, trotted into the room, wearing his brown knitted coat with his name embroidered on it. 'Tobik,' cried the injured lady, 'Ach, Tobik, come to me, my only friend, the only being who understands me!'

Very alarmed, the poor dog snarled and hid between the General's legs.

'Annette,' said Alexei Ivanovitch sternly, for he was extremely frightened of dogs, 'please confine your cries to people. I shudder to think what would happen to you if you had a horse between your legs!'

Although she was now in doubt as to whether her admission about the dress had been a good move, Mademoiselle Daru had had time, meanwhile, to evolve a plan of action. 'My benefactress,' she said, 'I have been weak. I beseech you to let me wear your headdress so that, having something of yours on my forehead, I may borrow some of your fortitude and fight off these temptations. To prove my repentance

tomorrow, I shall unpick my dress and make it into an altar-cloth.'

Anna Petrovna waved her hand sadly but firmly. 'No, unhappy Daru,' she said, 'I cannot and will not condone your conduct by lending you my turban. It would mean a compromise which my honesty cannot permit. No, no, no! Do not ask me to violate my soul! As for Him, He does not want your dress, for He does not need luxuries. You said, did you not, that the material was expensive? You may give it to me, and I shall use it in a way which will please Him and yet be a constant reminder to you of your sin.'

A wave of sickness overcame the companion; beads of perspiration rolled down the deep furrows round her mouth. Through a mist of tears she saw her *bois de rose* dress laid out ready on her bed, separated for ever from the turban for which it had been created. She remembered her nights of work and the small embroidered purse lying empty in her chest of drawers. For a second she saw her future life—pushing Anna Petrovna, now immense, in a bathchair at Karlsbad, while the face of Carl Gustavovitch receded far into the distance.

'Vulture!' she cried. 'Vulture! Not only shall you not have the dress, but I shall give it to Nannie!' Pressing her handkerchief to her mouth for fear of being sick, she ran out of the room.

'You see what she calls you?' cried Anna Petrovna. 'After all your generosity she not only insults your person but slights your good heart by implying that you do not want your old Nannie, who loves you so, to be given a present. I hope you will have the good sense to cease your courtship. The aged should prepare themselves for the grave. —Ach! This vulgar scene has broken me! Quick, my smelling salts, cut my stay-laces! Unlace my boots! Give me a meat pasty that I may gather strength to live. For it is I who shall be Father Frost tonight!'

'Annette,' said the General tearing at his wife's stay-laces, 'forgive me. I must follow your example and be generous. Let me, please let me be Father Frost once again!'

'No, Alexis,' answered Anna Petrovna sadly. 'I shall not accept your sacrifice. Let me wear the beard and I shall feel I am wearing a crown of thorns. But since I cannot recite the poem, maybe you will have the kindness to copy it out sixty-five times. The guests and the servants will receive it instead of presents. What a relief for your Nannie not to be given a rattle, and she must certainly not be given Daru's dress. It would be too great a shock.

Feeling that any new move might worsen his position, the General retired to his study and began to work, copying the poem in the perfect writing which was his chief claim to fame. Anna Petrovna suffered all day from righteous indignation. That day was long remembered by the whole household. Nannie was forbidden to light her stove, and Toby had his coat stripped off his back. 'Why should man and beast be warm when He was born in a manger?' At five o'clock she retired to pray. At six, when she emerged from her room, the General presented her with sixty-five copies of her poem. He had even drawn clover leaves at the top of the pages.

Anna Petrovna waved them away. 'Ach, things of the world again, when only the soul matters! I have prayed for strength to forgive, and I have received it. Alexei Ivanovitch, I accede to your wish and will allow you to be Father Frost. In spite of your accent, I will permit you to recite my poem. That your work may not be wasted and to recompense these humble souls who serve you, but to whom you pay no heed, you can hand each of them a copy of the poem instead of the usual presents. The poor also must have joy!'

'As for her, this unfortunate Daru,' she continued with a toss of her head, 'let her be told that I have forgiven and forgotten all, even to the extent of accepting the dress tomorrow morning. I shall myself wear the *bois de rose* turban as a sign of clemency. Let her know also—but with care, so as to avoid causing her a shock, for she loves me dearly and must now be suffering—that she can wear the mauve turban instead, the one she preferred. Ach, I do wish she had confided in me and consulted me on the colour of her outfit!'

W. T.

L. P. HARTLEY

THE first postcard came from Forfar.

I thought you might like a picture of Forfar, it began. *You have always been so interested in Scotland, and that is one reason why I am interested in you. I have enjoyed all your books, but do you really get to grips with people? I doubt it. Try to think of this as a handshake from your devoted admirer.* W.S.

Like other novelists, Walter Streeter was used to getting communications from strangers. Usually they were friendly but sometimes they were critical. In either case he always answered them, for he was conscientious. But answering them took up the time and energy he needed for his writing, so that he was rather relieved that W.S. had given no address. The photograph of Forfar was uninteresting and he tore it up. His anonymous correspondent's criticism, however, lingered in his mind. Did he really fail to come to grips with his characters? Perhaps he did. He was aware that in most cases they were either projections of his own personality or, in different forms, the antitheses of it. The Me and the Not Me. Perhaps W.S. had spotted this. Not for the first time Walter made a vow to be more objective.

About ten days later arrived another postcard, this time from Berwick-on-Tweed. *What do you think of Berwick-on-Tweed?* it said. *Like you, it's on the Border. I hope this doesn't sound rude. I don't mean that you are a border-line case! You know how much I admire your stories. Some people call them other-worldly. I think you should plump for one world or the other. Another warm handshake from.* W.S.

Walter Streeter pondered over this and began to wonder about the sender. Was his correspondent a man or a woman? It looked like a man's handwriting—commercial, un-selfconscious, and the criticism was like a man's. On the other hand, it was like a woman to probe—to want to make him feel at the same time

flattered and unsure of himself. He felt the faint stirrings of curiosity but soon dismissed them; he was not a man to experiment with acquaintances. Still, it was odd to think of this unknown person speculating about him, sizing him up. Otherworldly, indeed! He re-read the last two chapters he had written. Perhaps they didn't have their feet firm on the ground. Perhaps he was too ready to escape, as other novelists were nowadays, into an ambiguous world, a world where the conscious mind did not have things too much its own way. But did that matter? He threw the picture of Berwick-on-Tweed into his November fire and tried to write; but the words came haltingly, as though contending with an extra-strong barrier of self-criticism. And as the days passed, he became uncomfortably aware of self-division, as though someone had taken hold of his personality and was pulling it apart. His work was no longer homogeneous; there were two strains in it, unreconciled and opposing, and it went much slower as he tried to resolve the discord. Never mind, he thought: perhaps I was getting into a groove. These difficulties may be growing pains; I may have tapped a new source of supply. If only I could correlate the two and make their conflict fruitful, as many artists have!

The third postcard showed a picture of York Minster. *I know you are interested in cathedrals*, it said. *I'm sure this isn't a sign of megalomania in your case, but smaller churches are sometimes more rewarding. I'm seeking a good many churches on my way south. Are you busy writing or are you looking round for ideas? Another hearty handshake from your friend.* W.S.

It was true that Walter Streeter was interested in cathedrals. Lincoln Cathedral had been the subject of one of his youthful fantasies and he had written about it in a travel book. And it was also true that he admired mere size and was inclined to undervalue parish churches. But how could W.S. have known that? And was it really a sign of megalomania? And who was W.S., anyhow?

For the first time it struck him that the initials were his own. No, not for the first time. He had noticed it before, but they were such commonplace initials; they were Gilbert's, they were Maugham's, they were Shakespeare's—a common possession. Anyone might have them. Yet now it seemed to him an odd coincidence; and the idea came into his mind—suppose I have been writing postcards to myself? People did such things, especially people with split personalities. Not that he was one of them, of course. And yet there were these unexplained developments — the dichotomy in his writing, which had now extended from his thought to his style, making one paragraph languorous with semi-colons and subordinate clauses, and another sharp and incisive with main verbs and full-stops.

He looked at the handwriting again. It had seemed the perfection of ordinariness —anybody's hand—so ordinary as perhaps to be disguised. Now he fancied he saw in it resemblances to his own. He was just going to pitch the postcard in the fire when suddenly he decided not to. I'll show it to somebody, he thought.

His friend said, 'My dear fellow, it's all quite plain. The woman's a lunatic. I'm sure it's a woman. She has probably fallen in love with you and wants to make you interested in her. I should pay no attention whatsoever. People in the public eye are always getting letters from lunatics. If they worry you, destroy them without reading them. That sort of person is often a little psychic, and if she senses that she's getting a rise out of you, she'll go on.'

For a moment Walter Streeter felt reassured. A woman, a little mouse-like creature, who had somehow taken a fancy to him! What was there to feel uneasy about in that? Then his subconscious mind, searching for something to torment him with, and assuming the authority of logic, said: Supposing those postcards are a lunatic's, and you are writing them to yourself; doesn't it follow that you must be a lunatic too?

He tried to put the thought away from him; he tried to destroy the postcard as he had the others. But something in him wanted to preserve it. It had become a piece of him, he felt. Yielding to an irresistible compulsion, which he dreaded, he found himself putting it behind the clock

on the chimney-piece. He couldn't see it, but he knew that it was there.

He now had to admit to himself that the postcard business had become a leading factor in his life. It had created a new area of thoughts and feelings and they were most unhelpful. His being was strung up in expectation of the next postcard.

Yet when it came it took him completely by surprise. He could not bring himself to look at the picture. *I am coming nearer.* the postcard said; *I have got as near as Warwick Castle. Perhaps we shall come to grips after all. I advised you to come to grips with your characters, didn't I? Have I given you any new ideas? If I have, you ought to thank me, for they are what novelists want, I understand. I have been re-reading your novels, living in them, I might say. Je vous serre la main. As always.* W.S.

A wave of panic surged up in Walter Streeter. How was it that he had never noticed, all this time, the most significant fact about the postcards—that each one came from a place geographically closer to him than the last? *I am coming nearer.* Had his mind, unconsciously self-protective, worn blinkers? If it had, he wished he could put them back. He took an atlas and idly traced out W.S.'s itinerary. An interval of eighty miles or so seemed to separate the stopping-places. Walter lived in a large West Country town about eighty miles from Warwick.

Should he show the postcards to an alienist? But what could an alienist tell him? He would not know, what Walter wanted to know, whether he had anything to fear from W.S.

Better go to the police. The police were used to dealing with poison-pens. If they laughed at him, so much the better.

They did not laugh, however. They said they thought the postcards were a hoax and that W.S. would never show up in the flesh. Then they asked if there was anyone who had a grudge against him. 'No one that I know of,' Walter said. They, too, took the view that the writer was probably a woman. They told him not to worry but to let them know if further postcards came.

A little comforted, Walter went home. The talk with the police had done him good. He thought it over. It was quite true what he had told them—that he had no enemies. He was not a man of strong personal feelings; such feelings as he had went into his books. In his books he had drawn some pretty nasty characters. Not of recent years, however. Of recent years he had felt a reluctance to draw a very bad man or woman: he thought it morally irresponsible and artistically unconvincing, too. There was good in everyone: Iagos were a myth. Latterly—but he had to admit that it was several weeks since he laid pen to paper, so much had this ridiculous business of the postcards weighed upon his mind—if he had to draw a really wicked person he represented him as a Communist or a Nazi—someone who had deliberately put off his human characteristics. But in the past, when he was younger and more inclined to see things as black or white, he had let himself go once or twice. He did not remember his old books very well but there was a character in one, *The Pariah*, into whom he had really got his knife. He had written about him with extreme vindictiveness, just as if he was a real person whom he was trying to show up. He had experienced a curious pleasure in attributing every kind of wickedness to this man. He never gave him the benefit of the doubt. He never felt a twinge of pity for him, even when he paid the penalty for his misdeeds on the gallows. He had so worked himself up that the idea of this dark creature, creeping about brim-full of malevolence, had almost frightened him.

Odd that he couldn't remember the man's name. He took the book down from the shelf and turned the pages—even now they affected him uncomfortably. Yes, here it was, William . . . William . . . he would have to look back to find the surname. William Stainsforth.

His own initials.

He did not think the coincidence meant anything, but it coloured his mind and weakened its resistance to his obsession. So uneasy was he that when the next postcard came, it came as a relief.

I am quite close now, he read, and involuntarily turned the postcard over. The splendid central tower of Gloucester Cathedral met his eye. He stared at it as

if it could tell him something, then with an effort went on reading. *My movements, as you may have guessed, are not quite under my control, but all being well, I look forward to seeing you some time this week-end. Then we can really come to grips. I wonder if you'll recognise me! It won't be the first time you have given me hospitality. Ti serro la mano. As always.* W.S.

Walter took the postcard straight to the police station, and asked if he could have police protection over the week-end. The officer in charge smiled at him and said he was quite sure it was a hoax; but he would send someone to keep an eye on the place.

'You still have no idea who it would be?' he asked.

Walter shook his head.

It was Tuesday; Walter Streeter had plenty of time to think about the week-end. At first he felt he would not be able to live through the interval but, strange to say, his confidence increased instead of waning. He set himself to work as though he could work, and presently he found he could—differently from before, and, he thought, better. It was as though the nervous strain he had been living under had, like an acid, dissolved a layer of non-conductive thought that came between him and his subject: he was nearer to it now, and instead of responding only too readily to his stage directions, his characters responded wholeheartedly and with all their beings to the tests he put them to. So passed the days, and the dawn of Friday seemed like any other day until something jerked him out of his self-induced trance and suddenly he asked himself, 'When does a week-end begin?'

A long week-end begins on Friday. At that his panic returned. He went to the street door and looked out. It was a suburban, unfrequented street of detached Regency houses like his own. They had tall square gateposts, some crowned with semi-circular iron brackets holding lanterns. Most of these were out of repair: only two or three were ever lit. A car went slowly down the street; some people crossed it: everything was normal.

Several times that day he went to look and saw nothing suspicious, and when Saturday came, bringing no postcard, his panic had almost subsided. He nearly rang up the police to tell them not to bother to send anyone after all.

They were as good as their word: they did send someone. Between tea and dinner, the time when week-end guests most commonly arrive, Walter went to the door and there, between two unlit gateposts, he saw a policeman standing—the first policeman he had ever seen in Charlotte Street. At the sight, and the relief it brought him, he realised how anxious he had been. Now he felt safer than he had ever felt in his life, and also a little ashamed at having given extra trouble to a hard-worked body of men. Should he go and speak to his unknown guardian, offer him a cup of tea and a drink? It would be nice to hear him laugh at Walter's fancies. But no—somehow he felt his security the greater when its source was impersonal and anonymous. 'P.C. Smith' was somehow less impressive than 'police protection'.

Several times from an upper window (he didn't like to open the door and stare) he made sure that his guardian was still there; and once, for added proof, he asked his housekeeper to verify the strange phenomenon. Disappointingly, she came back saying she had seen no policeman; but she was not very good at seeing things, and when Walter went a few minutes later, he saw him plain enough. The man must walk about, of course; perhaps he had been taking a stroll when Mrs. Kendal looked.

It was contrary to his routine to work after dinner but tonight he did—he felt so much in the vein. Indeed, a sort of exaltation possessed him; the words ran off his pen; it would be foolish to check the creative impulse for the sake of a little extra sleep. On, on. They were right who said the small hours were the time to work. When his housekeeper came in to say goodnight, he scarcely raised his eyes.

In the warm, snug little room the silence purred around him like a kettle. He did not even hear the door-bell till it had been ringing for some time.

A visitor at this hour?

His knees trembling, he went to the door, scarcely knowing what he expected

to find; so what was his relief, on opening it, to see the doorway filled by the tall figure of a policeman. Without waiting for the man to speak,

'Come in, come in, my dear fellow,' he exclaimed. He held his hand out, but the policeman did not take it. 'You must have been very cold standing out there. I didn't know that it was snowing, though,' he added, seeing the snow-flakes on the policeman's cape and helmet. 'Come in and warm yourself.'

'Thanks,' said the policeman. 'I don't mind if I do.'

Walter knew enough of the phrases used by men of the policeman's stamp not to mistake this for a grudging acceptance. 'This way,' he prattled on. 'I was writing in my study. By Jove, it *is* cold, I'll turn the gas on more. Now won't you take your traps off, and make yourself at home?'

'I can't stay long,' the policeman said, 'I've got a job to do, as *you* know.'

'Oh, yes,' said Walter, 'such a silly job, a sinecure.' He stopped, wondering if the policeman would know what a sinecure was. 'I suppose you know what it's about —the postcards?'

The policeman nodded.

'But nothing can happen to me as long as you are here,' said Walter. 'I shall be as safe . . . as safe as houses. Stay as long as you can, and have a drink.'

'I never drink on duty,' said the policeman. Still in his cape and helmet, he looked round. 'So this is where you work?' he said.

'Yes, I was writing when you rang.'

'Some poor chap's for it, I expect,' the policeman said.

'Oh why?' Walter was hurt by his unfriendly tone, and noticed how hard his eyes were.

'I'll tell you in a minute,' said the policeman, and then the telephone bell rang. Walter excused himself and hurried from the room.

'This is the police station,' said a voice. 'Is that Mr. Streeter?'

Walter said it was.

'Well, Mr. Streeter, how is everything at your place? All right, I hope? I'll tell you why I ask. I'm sorry to say we quite forgot about that little job we were going to do for you. Bad co-ordination, I'm afraid.'

'But,' said Walter, 'you did send someone.'

'No, Mr. Streeter, I'm afraid we didn't.'

'But there's a policeman here, here in this very house.'

There was a pause, then his interlocutor said, in a less casual voice,

'He can't be one of our chaps. Did you see his number by any chance?'

'No.'

Another pause and the voice said,

'Would you like us to send somebody now?'

'Yes, p—— please.'

'All right then, we'll be with you in a jiffy.'

Walter put back the receiver. What now? he asked himself. Should he barricade the door? Should he run out into the street? While he was debating, the door opened and his guest came in.

'No room's private when the street door's once passed.' he said. 'Had you forgotten I was a policeman?'

'Was?' said Walter, edging away from him. 'You *are* a policeman.'

'I have been other things as well,' the policeman said. 'Thief, pimp, blackmailer, not to mention murderer. *You* should know.'

The policeman, if such he was, seemed to be moving towards him and Walter suddenly became alive to the importance of small distances—from the sideboard to the table, from one chair to another.

'I don't know what you mean,' he said. 'Why do you speak like that? I've never done you any harm. I've never set eyes on you before.'

'Oh, haven't you?' the man said. 'But you've thought about me, and'—his voice rose—'and you've written about me. You got some fun out of me, didn't you? Now I'm going to get some fun out of you. You made me just as nasty as you could. Wasn't that doing me harm? You didn't think what it would be like to be me, did you? You didn't put yourself in my place, did you? You hadn't any pity for me, had you? Well, I'm not going to have any pity for you.'

'But I tell you,' cried Walter, fingering the table's edge, 'I don't know you!'

'And now you say you don't know me! You did all that to me and then forget me!' His voice became a whine, charged with self-pity. 'You forgot William Stainsforth.'

'William Stainsforth!'

'Yes. I was your scapegoat, wasn't I? You unloaded all your self-dislike on me. You felt pretty good while you were writing about me. Now, as one W.S. to another, what shall I do, if I behave in character?'

'I——I don't know,' muttered Walter.

'You don't know?' Stainsforth sneered. 'You ought to know, you fathered me. What would William Stainsforth do if he met his old dad in a quiet place, his kind old dad who made him swing?'

Walter could only stare at him.

'You know what he'd do as well as I,' said Stainsforth. Then his face changed and he said abruptly, 'No you don't, because you never really understood me. I'm not so black as you painted me.' He paused and a flame of hope flickered in Walter's breast. 'You never gave me a chance, did you? Well, I'm going to give you one. That shows you never understood me, doesn't it?'

Walter nodded.

'And there's another thing you have forgotten.'

'What is that?'

'I was a kid once,' the ex-policeman said.

Walter said nothing.

'You admit that?' said William Stainsforth grimly. 'Well, if you can tell me of one virtue you ever credited me with—just one kind thought—just one redeeming feature—'

'Yes,' said Walter, trembling.

'Well, then I'll let you off.'

'And if I can't?' whispered Walter.

'Well, then, that's just too bad. We'll have to come to grips and you know what that means. You took off one of my arms but I've still got the other. "Stainsforth of the iron arm", you called me.'

Walter began to pant.

'I'll give you two minutes to remember,' Stainsforth said.

They both looked at the clock. At first the stealthy movement of the hand paralysed Walter's thought. He stared at William Stainsforth's face, his cruel and crafty face, which seemed to be always in shadow, as if it was something the light could not touch. Desperately he searched his memory for the one fact that would save him; but his memory, clenched like a fist, would give up nothing. 'I must invent something,' he thought, and suddenly his mind relaxed and he saw, printed on it like a photograph, the last page of the book. Then, with the speed and magic of a dream, each page appeared before him in perfect clarity until the first was reached, and he realised with overwhelming force that what he looked for was not there. In all that evil there was not one hint of good. And he felt, compulsively and with a kind of exaltation, that unless he testified to this, the cause of goodness everywhere would be betrayed.

'There's nothing to be said for you!' he shouted. 'Of all your dirty tricks this is the dirtiest! The very snow-flakes on you are turning black! How dare you ask me for a character? I've given you one already! God forbid that I should ever say a good word for you! I'd rather die!'

Stainsforth's one arm shot out. 'Then die!' he said.

The police found Walter Streeter slumped across the dining-table. In view of what had happened previously, they did not exclude the possibility of foul play. But the pathologist could not state with certainty the cause of death. There was a clue, but it led nowhere. On the table and on the victim's clothes were flakes of melting snow. It had run down his neck, soaking his underclothes. It had even, in some way, got into his stomach and might have killed him for, on analysis, it was found to be poisonous. Perhaps he had taken his own life. But what the substance was, and where it came from, remained a mystery, for no snow was reported from any district on the day he died.

ZENOBIA: QUEEN OF THE EAST

MAURICE COLLIS

THE Roman Empire took a plunge into chaos in the middle of the third century A.D. It looked as if it were falling to pieces, though its real disintegration did not begin until a hundred and fifty years later. After the death of Septimius Severus in 211, there were indications of what was coming. His son and successor, Caracalla, was a ruffian, and in 217 was murdered by the Prefect of the Imperial Guard. The Prefect, who assumed the purple, lasted only a year, and was displaced by the abominable Elagabalus, less known than Nero but much more evil. He was a Syrian boy in his teens, the hereditary priest of the sun-god of Emesa, a Roman colonial city south of Antioch, and was by far the most fantastic Princeps who ever took up his residence on the Palatine. That the army, the senate and the Roman people should have set over themselves so disgraceful a fellow, an oriental and the hierophant of a god outside their pantheon, shows the rot that had begun in the centre.

It will help in the understanding of what follows if we take a close look at Elagabalus, which can be done, thanks to Lampridius, one of the writers of the *Historia Augusta*. Here are a few extracts: 'He would refuse to swim in a pool that was not perfumed with saffron. And he could not rest easily on cushions which were not stuffed with rabbit fur or feathers from under the wings of partridges. He frequently ate camels-heels and also cocks-combs taken from the living birds, and the tongues of peacocks and nightingales, because he believed they gave immunity from plague. He set before the palace servants huge platters heaped with the viscera of mullets, and flamingo brains and partridge eggs. The beards of the mullets that he had served were so large that they were brought on, like cress or parsley or fenugreek, in platters shaped like discs. He fed his dogs on goose livers and his lions on parrots. At dessert he called in doped leopards, who would jump on the couches and terrify the guests. For ten successive days he served peas with gold-pieces, lentils with onyx, beans with amber, and rice with pearls; and instead of pepper sprinkled pearls on fish and truffles. In a banqueting room with reversible ceiling he once overwhelmed his parasites with violets and other flowers, so that some of them were actually smothered to death, being unable to crawl out to the top. He would distribute to his dinner guests chances inscribed on spoons, the chance of one person reading "ten camels", another "ten flies", another "ten ostriches", another "a dozen eggs".

'The chances for the band and the acrobats were "a hundred gold pieces" or "a dead dog". He had a pet hippopotamus, a crocodile and a rhinoceros. All this so pleased the populace that they rejoiced he was emperor.'

Such was the fantastic *farceur* at dinner on the Palatine. But he could be much more sinister. Mounted in a chariot drawn by four elephants, he would drive over the Vatican hill, knocking over the tombs that obstructed his way; or would let loose venomous snakes among the crowd waiting at dawn for the ampitheatre to open. A panic would ensue; some would be trampled and others die of snake-bite. When he put up his drunk friends for the night, he would let tame lions into their bedrooms, which so terrified them that some died of heart failure.

Lest one should think of him principally as a lunatic clown, it is well to weigh the following from the same historian: 'He kept about him every kind of magician; and he would examine children's vitals and torture the victims after the manner of his own native rites.' And this about his procession when on tour: 'He would take with him six hundred wagons, asserting that the King of the Persians travelled with ten thousand camels and Nero with five hundred carriages. The reason for all these vehicles was the vast number of his

procurers and bawds, catamites and lusty partners in depravity.'

Besides being a prodigal, a debauchee, a pervert and a killer, he made a mock of the public services. His Praetorian Prefect was a dancer, his commander of the watch a charioteer, and his commissioner of state granaries a barber. Some of his courtiers were old men looking like philosophers, who did up their hair in nets and boasted they had husbands. After four years of this, the Praetorian Guard grew doubtful, and in A.D. 222 seized him in a latrine where he had hidden, cut his throat, dragged his naked body through the streets and threw it into the Tiber. He was under twenty and very good-looking. There are busts of him in the Louvre, the Naples Museum and the Capitoline.

After this assassination there was a pause before the Empire's eclipse began. The late Caesar's aunt, Mamaea, a Syrian, and his young cousin, Alexander Severus, ruled till a usurper murdered the latter in 235. In the next three years there were six emperors, of whom five were murdered. By 250 the Goths were ravaging across the frontiers and the then emperor Decius fell in battle when he sought to hold them in what is now Rumania. In 260 occurred the crowning catastrophe. The Emperor Valerian, an old man of seventy, marched at the head of his legions to stop the incursions of Sapor, the Persian king, and was taken prisoner. There is still to be seen at Nakhchi Rousten in Persia a colossal rock sculpture depicting this event. Sapor is on his horse, wearing frilled trousers and a high headdress like a busby. Valerian kneels before him in military uniform.

So it had gone—in 222 Rome ruled by a dissolute Syrian, in 260 her Caesar a suppliant before a Persian. Sapor made the most of his unprecedented victory. Valerian, in chains, and wearing the purple, was paraded as a spectacle for the mob. Whenever Sapor mounted his horse, he put his foot on the neck of the late Lord of the World. For the next ten years the Empire was in dissolution, while numerous claimants, generally known as the Thirty Tyrants, contended for the title of Augustus.

It was these chaotic circumstances that permitted Zenobia, the widow of a ruler of Palmyra, an oasis city in the Roman province of Syria, to become Queen of the whole Roman orient from the Black Sea to the Upper Nile. Indeed, her ambitions are said to have been even greater, for she is listed in the Augustan History as one of the claimants to the purple.

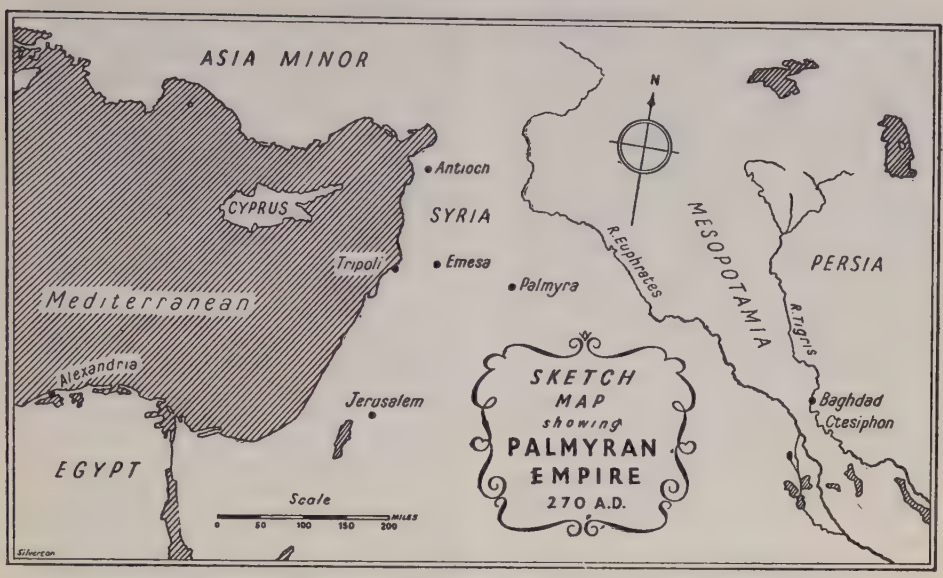
Zenobia's husband, Odaenathus (to give him the Roman form of his Aramaic name) was a very distinguished man. On behalf of Rome, he threw back Sapor, who, after his victory over Valerian, had advanced as far as Antioch on the Mediterranean. Everyone thought that Gallienus, Valerian's son, would avenge the father whom he had succeeded as Emperor. But Gallienus was not that sort of man. He was interested in everything except hard work. Himself a philosopher, his great friend was no less than the famous Neo-Platonist philosopher, Plotinus, the star of the Alexandrian school and, indeed, an extraordinary personage. Porphyry relates that Gallienus proposed to give Plotinus a ruined city of Campania, in which to set up Plato's ideal republic, at the very time that news of mutinies and revolts were coming in by every post. In A.D. 262, by when his poor father had for two years been used as a mounting block, Gallienus celebrated the Decennalian festival at Rome as if perfect peace prevailed. Trebellius Pollio, one of the authors of the Augustan History, has left us a farcical picture of the occasion. In the van of the procession, as it wheeled into the forum from the direction of the Via Triumphalis, were a hundred white oxen with shot-silk coats, ten elephants out of the zoo, two hundred wild beasts in fancy costumes, boxers who sparred as they went, but not to hurt because they wore straps (the next effeminacy to boxing gloves) and buffoons capering in the rôle of the drunk Polyphemus of the music-hall stage. Gallienus followed in a triumphal toga, supported by a group of elegant patricians. Behind were hired out-of-works, dressed to look like captive Goths, Sarmatians, Franks, and even as Persians, as if Gallienus had, indeed, avenged his father. These mummers aroused uproarious laughter among the onlookers along the route. At some point a party of wits went up to the Persians and began to scrutinise them, making them turn this way and

that, examining them full face and then in profile. When asked what on earth they were doing, they replied: 'We are searching for the Emperor's father.' Gallienus himself was in the highest spirits. 'What have we for luncheon?' he kept calling out. 'What's on at the theatre tomorrow night? Let's all go to the circus.' Of him Gibbon says: 'He was a master of several curious but useless sciences, a ready orator, an elegant poet, a skilful gardener, an excellent cook, and a most contemptible prince.' Gibbon is declared by some writers to have been too harsh, but you will agree with him if you examine the Gallienus in the Capitoline Museum, a penetrating portrait bust. He wears side-whiskers like Nero, but is not a quarter as handsome; his expression is very unpleasant.

But in the drama of Zenobia, Gallienus has his place, for it was he who laid the foundation of her fortunes by creating her husband, Odaenathus, Dux Orientis or Leader of the East.

A word here about Palmyra, Odaenathus's city. How came it that an oasis in the Syrian desert, a caravan-stop half-way between the Euphrates and Antioch, could have become the seat of a prince with resources enough to chase the King of Kings over the great river and capture his travelling harem, as he did? The answer is that it was a road junction of the first importance. The trade from China and India, coming up the Persian Gulf, arrived by the Tigris at Sapor's capital, the Ctesiphon, whose arch still stands on the bank, a landmark on the flat which everyone who campaigned in the Mesopotamia of the First World War became well acquainted with. Thence the silks and the pearls, the scented woods and the drugs, were carried on camels to Palmyra, where three main roads branched—northwards for Antioch and the Levant, westwards for Tripoli, a port for Italy, and southwards for Damascus, Jerusalem and Egypt. From the earliest times (2000 B.C.) there is mention of Palmyra. Its period of greatest prosperity began when Syria became a province of the Roman Empire. The Roman peace was what it required to work the trade route efficiently. Though on the Empire's most easterly fringe and inhabited chiefly by Arabs, it grew, as years passed, more and more Roman, changing from an Arab caravanserai into a magnificent Greco-Roman city. The Emperors favoured it. Hadrian in A.D. 129 made it large grants from imperial funds. It had a local government of its own, which rendered it largely independent of the Roman Proconsul of Syria. Its leading figures, become millionaires, were glad to accept the title of Roman citizens and began to adopt Roman names. By the time of the Emperor Septimius Severus A.D. (193–211) it had the coveted status of a Colonia and has been described as the financial capital of the Eastern world. Of its public edifices, the ruins of which are still very imposing today, the most splendid was the temple of Bêl, the sun-god of the local pantheon; and the most delightful was the colonnaded avenue nearly a mile long which traversed the city. In the third century the leading family was the Julii Aurelii Septimii, the family to which Odaenathus belonged. At the beginning of his career he held the appointment of Chief Magistrate. The ill-fated Valerian gave him the rank of Consul and, as we have seen, Gallienus, in recognition of his services in driving back Sapor, made him Dux Orientis, to which title was added that of Imperator. As such he was Commander-in-Chief of the Roman legions in the Orient. In this way he became not only sovereign of Palmyra, but also colleague of the Roman Emperor. Indeed, in the chaos of the time he was *de facto* the Eastern Emperor. But one day in August 267 he was assassinated, leaving a son, Waballath, a young boy, and a widow, Zenobia.

Before taking a closer look at Zenobia, it will be convenient to clear up her legal position between the death of her husband in 267 and the end of her career in 272, the five years when she was the world's most famous woman. Gallienus recognised her as Queen of Palmyra, but did not give her or her young son the military titles and powers of Dux and Imperator. Presumably he did not think her capable of being Rome's champion. But she was just as capable as her husband and now resolved to enlarge his dominions without the sanction of Rome. Her army with its archers and heavily armoured cavalry had



no rival, and in Zabdas, a relative, she had a good general. He was sent to occupy the Roman province of Egypt. This he accomplished without difficulty and also added to the Palmyra domain all the Roman provinces in Asia Minor except Bithynia on the Black Sea coast. Zenobia, however, did not at first break openly with Rome. The coinage of the territories she held continued to bear the stamp of the Emperor's head, that is to say, Gallienus's till 268 and his successor, Claudius's, till 270. In that year Aurelian succeeded. So hard pressed was he by the barbarians of the North that in an effort to preserve at least the legal fiction of a united Empire, he felt obliged to sanction what Zenobia had done, and, as if it had been done on behalf of Rome, allowed her and her son to put their portraits on the reverse of the eastern coinage, a concession which he hoped would stave off a total breach. In February 271, however, Zenobia declared her son Waballath independent Emperor of the East and Aurelian's head disappeared from the coinage. She herself took the title of Empress, and her coins bear the legend Septimia Zenobia Augusta. Appearances seemed to justify her action; but it was a miscalculation, for Aurelian was a great man.

The best description of her is Trabellius Pollio's little biography in the Augustan History, which was written in the generation after her death. He makes it clear that she was a cosmopolitan, who spoke, besides her native Aramaic, Latin, Greek and Egyptian. She pretended that Cleopatra was one of her ancestors and that the gold plate she used at banquets had once belonged to her. Besides being a linguist, she was also a writer, and had composed a history of Alexandria and the Orient. Her appearance was striking, both by reason of her beauty, which Pollio says was 'incredible', and because of the spirit that flashed in her dark eyes. Her teeth were very good, her skin a dark olive, and her voice exceptionally clear and resonant. In the recesses of her Greco-Roman palace at Palmyra she insisted on a Persian etiquette, by which is meant that her courtiers and attendants used towards her postures as if worshipping a goddess, a mode quite unlike the court etiquette of the Palatine, where the fiction that the Emperor was an officer appointed by the Senate governed

his attitude towards the Roman grandees, though on his death he might be granted the title of Divine. Outside the palace she adopted Roman manners or, rather, modelled herself on the Princeps. On occasions of public assembly she would appear in a helmet, wearing a purple belt, and with bare arms. Sometimes she drove out in a carriage, but more often went on horseback and, to encourage her troops, would on occasion dismount and march with them for three or four miles. When entertaining Zabdas and her other generals, she would drink with them and it amused her to drink Persians under the table. From these details her character emerges as ebullient and broad, and is typical of the Orient, in all parts of which, from China to Persia, such female personalities have appeared from time to time.

The remarkable quality of her mind is further illustrated by her appointment as chief minister of Linginus, perhaps the most famous Greek man-of-letters of the day. One has to remember that Alexandria, not Rome, was by the third century the literary metropolis of the Empire. It was there that Longinus completed his studies. For thirty years he was the best-known lecturer and critic at Athens, the Neo-Platonist Porphyry being one of his pupils. At the age of fifty-eight he met Zenobia when on a visit to Syria and accepted her offer of the chief ministership, a very weighty appointment in view of the world-wide scope of her ambitions. By then his reputation for learning was immense; he is described by Porphyry as 'the first of critics' and by Eunapius in his *Lives of the Sophists* (a fourth century work) as 'a living library and walking museum'. Zenobia is said to have been advised by him that it was safe to break with Rome; but professors are seldom statesmen and, in particular, a Greek professor, with his traditional contempt for Roman brains, was unlikely to offer a balanced opinion. With so distinguished a literary man as her counsellor, Zenobia felt that not only in her army and conquests was she the equal of Rome, but also in her culture.

Another man she relied on was Paul of Samosata, Patriarch of Antioch, very different from Longinus, but as outstanding a character. The mention of him opens up the whole question of the early Church. Suffice it to say here that, though Constantine's recognition of Christianity as the religion of the Empire was more than forty years in the future, the Church was fully organised by A.D. 260 under the Bishop of Rome, and a complete exposition of its doctrines had been made by Origen of Alexandria, under whom, curiously enough, Longinus had studied in his youth.

What attracted Zenobia to Paul of Samosata was not, as can be imagined, his Christianity. The state religion of Palmyra was a variety of sun-worship and Zenobia herself was probably a Neo-Platonist of sorts. On the contrary, Paul's recommendation was his unorthodoxy and that he aspired to set up in Asia an independent version of Christianity. This suited her politics exactly. He had an enthusiastic following and if he could become Patriarch or Pope of an eastern Church, she would be able to control through him her Christian subjects, who were numerous and influential. So he was frequently at Palmyra for consultation. It is interesting to note the particular form of his heresy. He did not believe that Christ from the beginning was cognate with the two other persons of the Trinity, that is, that he was in essence divine, but alleged that he was a man who became divine through good works and the practice of meditation. This view appealed to Zenobia since it had analogies with the Neo-Platonist conception of fusion with divinity, about which she and Longinus, no doubt, had had lengthy discussions.

Paul of Samosata was not like an early Christian bishop as we imagine them. He was something between a Fascist leader and a fashionable preacher. There is a famous description of him in Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History, which was written under Constantine some thirty-five years later. When he went out, says Eusebius, he was accompanied by a bodyguard and his stenographers. As he 'strutted in the market-place', letters would be handed to him, and continuing his walk, he would read them and dictate the answers, so as to impress people with the number and urgency of the matters referred to him.

When preaching in church, he used to slap his thigh and stamp; and expected the congregation to applaud or wave their handkerchiefs or shout out and jump up, as in a theatre; those who listened quietly he rebuked. On Easter Sunday psalms addressed to himself were sung. His subordinate bishops were encouraged to preach in the same florid manner. Wherever he went, he was always accompanied by two pretty women—conduct, says the history, which, even if granted that it was innocent, set a very bad example. In spite of the disapproval of a section of the clergy, who appealed against him to Rome, he was enormously popular with the masses. Such was Zenobia's second great friend as he appeared to his opponents. His vital and abounding character matched her own; he was exactly the man to flatter and applaud her ambitions. It was at this time that she caused a splendid chariot to be made, chased with gold and inlaid with gems, in which to make a triumphal entry into Rome, when her army had proclaimed her Roman Empress and the Senate, bowing, as it always did, to the inevitable, invited her to the Palatine. After all, Elagabalus had become Emperor, that wretched boy from the sun-temple at Emesa, a Syrian like herself. If he, why not she, Zenobia?

But she was forgetting Aurelian; rather, she did not conceive that such a person as she believed Aurelian to be, was of the least consequence. He had been hailed as Princeps by the army of the Danube in March 270, being at the time fifty-eight years of age. His father was a retired centurion or the like, a Romanised barbarian, who at the end of his service in the legions had been given a farm in what is now Yugoslavia, on the demesne of a senator called Aurelius. Pannonia, as that part was then called, was as Roman as Gaul or Britain.

Following in his father's footsteps, Aurelian enlisted in a legion. Besides great physical strength and a resolute character, he was found to have enormous military capacity. By the time of Claudius (A.D. 268) he was the most distinguished general in the service. The soldiers chose him to succeed Claudius, and the Senate, though it had appointed another officer, bowed to their decision.

It seems that from the moment of his assuming the purple, he resolved to devote himself to the one object of what he called restoring the world. The situation was as bad as bad could be. Gaul had been lost and was ruled by a pseudo-Emperor called Tetricus; the line of the Danube was so weak that there was imminent danger of the Goths breaking it and marching on Rome; the whole Roman orient was in the hands of Zenobia. His first step was to reorganise the army and, as we have seen, he sought to keep Zenobia quiet by creating her, as the regent of her son, Rome's representative in the East. We have seen, too, how by February A.D. 272 she dropped his portrait from her coinage and threw off the mask. But she had chosen the wrong moment, since it was precisely then that he flung back the Goths over the Danube and was ready to take the offensive against her. He had nominally an army of 180,000 men, consisting of fifteen legions with their auxiliaries and the Praetorian Guard. But the legions were not up to strength and half had to be left to guard the West. It is thought that he marched on Zenobia with not more than 50,000, but they were the élite of the Danubian legions and included the Praetorians. We should think of this expeditionary force, which started early in 272, as cosmopolitan, and as including in its ranks men from countries now called Austria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Dalmatia and Africa. When Zenobia learned that it was on the way, she consulted the oracle of Apollo in Cilicia and of Venus in Syria and was given discouraging answers by both. It should be added that Aurelian had sent to Egypt in the late summer of 271 his best general, Probus, who reoccupied that province without difficulty. Probus had orders to come up through Palestine and join the imperial army near Antioch, orders which he seems to have carried out.

Aurelian marched unopposed through Asia Minor, passed the Taurus by the Syrian Gates, which were left undefended, and arrived on the line of the Orontes above Antioch, where Zenobia awaited him at the head of her troops, with General Zabdas in chief command. In the

first brush with the Roman advance guard, her cavalry was worsted, and she decided to evacuate Antioch, whose inhabitants were not well disposed to her, and fall back towards Palmyra by the Emesa road. Fearing that the mob would rise, should she seem to be fleeing, Zabdas paraded a man dressed to resemble Aurelian and gave out that he had captured the Emperor. This ruse enabled them to get away unhindered. Next morning Aurelian entered Antioch unopposed. Here he met Paul of Samosata. The opponents of that extraordinary prelate, now that Zenobia was gone, saw their chance. Approaching Aurelian, whose behaviour to the inhabitants had been very correct, they asked him to dismiss Paul from his patriarchship. After hearing their case, Aurelian gave judgment for them, saying that Paul was subordinate to the Bishop of Rome and, as the bishop disapproved of him, he must go. It is interesting to reflect that by this decision Aurelian was the first Roman Emperor to recognise officially the head of the Christian Church as having ecclesiastical jurisdiction throughout Christendom. His immediate reasons were, of course, that Paul was one of Zenobia's chief supporters and his policy detrimental to the unity of the empire.

In a day or so Aurelian marched out of Antioch down the Emesa road, brushing aside some troops that Zabdas had left to harass him. On arrival at Emesa he found the Palmyran army numbering 70,000 men, drawn up in battle formation. His infantry was the better, but he had nothing to match their heavy cavalry, whose riders and horses were completely armoured like mediaeval knights. Nevertheless, in the battle which followed, Roman discipline won the day. Zenobia, with the remnant of her army, fled across the desert to her oasis capital. Emesa opened its gates and Aurelian found himself in the home town of his disgraceful predecessor, Elagabalus, who had once been the Emesa sun-god's priest. By a coincidence Aurelian's religion was sun-worship, for his mother had been an assistant priestess of the sun in far-away Pannonia, to which the cult had been brought by legionaries who had served in the East. Aurelian's first act, therefore, was to go to the sun-temple and thank the god for his victory. He was encouraged to think that his successes would continue, for the sun-god also reigned at Palmyra. This done, he pursued Zenobia across the desert to Palmyra, a distance of about eighty miles. As there were only three wells en route and the desert Arabs hung on him like wolves, he was thankful to arrive safely under the walls of her capital.

It was now very hot and there was not enough water. And the rumour was that Zenobia had asked help from the Persians. But by bribery Aurelian won over the desert Arabs and was able to assure his supplies and communications. He then addressed a letter in Greek to Zenobia, offering to spare her if she surrendered. Her reply is reproduced in the Augustan History:

'From Zenobia, Queen of the East, to Aurelian Augustus. No one except yourself has ever demanded what you now demand . . . You ask my surrender as though unaware that Cleopatra preferred to die a Queen . . . The reinforcements we are expecting from Persia will make you sing a less arrogant tune.'

But this was bravado. The Persians did send a small relief force, but it was routed. When provisions in the town began to run short, the end was in sight. Zenobia, however, had one card left. She would go in person to Ctesiphon and, by reminding Sapor, now a man of seventy, of his capture of Valerian, would fire him to capture Aurelian also, and thereby achieve a fabulous triumph. One night she mounted a female dromedary, 'which is the swiftest of that kind of animal and much more swift than any horse,' as Count Zosimus tells us in his History, and took the desert road for the Euphrates. Aurelian, apprised next morning of the event, sent after her a troop of Moorish cavalry. They failed to overtake her in the desert, but caught her on the river bank before she could embark on the ferry. She was made prisoner and brought back to Palmyra, which surrendered at the news.

Aurelian, though he took the vast royal treasure, did not sack the city or massacre its inhabitants. Satisfied that the Palmyran empire was now at an end, he set out for home, taking with him Zenobia, her son and two daughters, and Longinus, along

with other notables of the city. On reaching Emesa he held a court martial, partly to satisfy the soldiers who were clamouring for Zenobia's execution. Disaster after disaster had broken her nerve. Death was more terrifying than she had supposed when she had written of dying like Cleopatra, and she determined to avoid it if she could. Laying the blame for all that had occurred on Longinus and her other counsellors, who had taken advantage, she said, of her weakness as a woman, she begged Aurelian for her life, as he had promised if she surrendered. Knowing how disappointed the Roman populace would be were she not in his triumphal procession, he accepted her plea, but put Longinus to death, an act which pleased the soldiery, though there were others who disapproved, holding that so eminent a writer should have been spared.

The Roman army retraced its steps through Asia Minor to the Bosporus. Hardly had Aurelian crossed into Thrace than he received a despatch from the commander of the garrison left in Palmyra, saying that the city had revolted. There and then he turned about, and by a prodigious forced march was back at Palmyra within two months. This time he sacked and destroyed the city and put the inhabitants to the sword.

Returning again to Europe, he did not go at once to Rome but, resolving first to finish the restoration of the world, made a sudden descent upon Gaul and put an end to the independent rule of Tetricus. Then, taking the title of Restitutor Orbis, he announced to the Senate that he would hold his triumph in January 274.

A Roman triumph was meant to glorify the victor and humiliate the vanquished. The entertainment of the populace was another object, and no spectacle was likely to entertain them better than the sight of Zenobia, Queen of the East, the most famous woman since Cleopatra. Tetricus, whom we would now call a French nobleman, was to figure with her, and would also be well worth seeing. Unfortunately his story is too long to relate here, but it is one of the great comedies of the world, for he had been Gaul's Caesar *malgré lui*, who dared not put off the purple that his troops had put on him at the instance of a romantic woman.[1]

The fullest account of the triumph is in Vopiscus's life of Aurelian. Such processions always were headed by animals, and, so, first came twenty elephants, then two hundred wild beasts of various sorts, tamed enough to be led along, the most exciting being four tigers (for all our conquests in India we never had four tigers led down the Mall). Behind the animals marched eight hundred pairs of gladiators, promise of a first-class show in the Colosseum. Then Aurelian, tall, spare, grey-haired and bearded, his forehead wrinkled and his eye alert, passed, standing in a chariot drawn by four stags, an outfit captured from the King of the Goths, either his own or some god's. Following him were the prisoners, some bearing gifts like suppliants, men from all the races of the East; others with their arms bound behind their backs, barbarians from beyond the northern frontiers. Each captive had a placard saying where he came from. The placard on a group of Gothic women stated them to be genuine Amazons. And now at last appeared the two that the crowd was waiting for, Tetricus, his arms bound, dressed in a scarlet cloak, a yellow tunic and trousers, the Gallic fashion still thought barbarous in Rome, and Zenobia 'decked with jewels and in golden chains, the weight of which was borne by others.' Pollio in his biography of her is more explicit and says: 'She was adorned with gems so huge that she laboured under the weight of them. It is said that this woman, courageous though she was, halted frequently, saying that she could not endure her jewelled load. Furthermore, her feet were bound with shackles of gold and her hands with golden fetters, and even on her neck she wore a chain of gold, the weight of which was borne by a Persian buffoon.' Behind her was the gold and jewelled chariot in which she had planned to drive into Rome.

The anxious moment for the two chief captives was when, having passed under the arch of Septimius Severus at the head of the Forum, they came opposite the Mamertine prison below the Capitol. However, they were not taken in there and

[1] A Gaulish lady of rank named Victoria, like Zenobia a romantic, who, anticipating history, wanted an independent France

strangled, as they would have been in former times. Aurelian, stern though he was, had decided to pardon them. To Zenobia he gave a villa at Tibur (the modern Tivoli), then a place where the patricians had country-houses, a beautiful hilly spot with cascades some twenty miles east of Rome. She lived there for the rest of her life in the style of a Roman lady. Her daughters married into patrician families and her son, Waballath, became a lawyer. Tetricus was allotted a site on the Caelian Hill overlooking the Colosseum. When his house was ready, he entertained Aurelian to dinner. Later, he got a job in the administration.

Zenobia and Tetricus long outlived their magnanimous captor, for he was assassinated the following year. During the short time he had left of life, he erected a magnificent temple to the sun, reformed the currency, built a new wall, increased the weight of free bread by an ounce, was the first to distribute handkerchiefs to the people, not to blow their noses with but to wave, planned also to supply them with free drinks, but was dissuaded by his Praetorian Prefect, who said: 'If they get free drinks they will next ask for free chicken', and—a curious detail—issued an order forbidding men to wear purple boots.

There is nothing to show that Zenobia suffered from shock or depression after the loss of her empire, but if melancholy for a while, the news of Aurelian's assassination will have shown her how fortunate she was in reality. Her rule of the East with her husband and as sole Queen had lasted twelve years, a long reign at a time of such danger and turmoil. Gallienus's had been eight years, Claudius's two, Aurelian's six, each suddenly terminated by a fatal mischance. Many others, too, had come to grievous ends, but she was alive, had a house with a view, at an excellent address, was surrounded by her children, in a good climate and within easy reach of Rome, now again the capital of the world. Though a romantic, everything shows her to have been a practical woman and when she counted her blessings, she will not have been dissatisfied. When they asked Tetricus how he liked Rome after being Emperor in Gaul, he replied: 'Better a modest employment in Italy than to be Caesar elsewhere.' One feels that Zenobia would have agreed there was some truth in this.

In December 274 a statue to Aurelian was erected in Rome with the following inscription:

IMP CAES L DOMITIO
AURELIANO PIO FELICI
INVICTO AUG PONTIF MAXIMO
GOTHICO MAX GERMANICO MAX
PARTHICO MAX CARPICO MAX
TRIB POT V COS DESIGN III IMP III
P.P. PRO CONS RESTITUTORI ORBIS
FORTISSIMO ET VICTORIOSISSIMO
PRINCIPI
V.C. PRAEF URB
DEVOTUS NUMINI MAJESTATIQUE
EJUS

This lapidary shorthand might be interpreted:

> Dedicated to the Imperator and Caesar, Lucius Domitius Aurelian, pious, happy and unconquered, Augustus and Chief Pontiff, whose titles are Gothicus and Germanicus, Parthicus and Carpicus, who is Tribune of the People, has been Consul five times and thrice saluted as Imperator, is called Father of his Country, has proconsular rank, is hailed as Restorer of the World, a most brave and victorious Princeps, a most distinguished man, and Prefect of the City.

Zenobia on her drives into Rome must have read this inscription and, not without pride, may have reflected that it had taken so big a man to overthrow her.

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VALERIAN KNEELING BEFORE SAPOR

Rock Sculpture at Nakhche Roustem. Persian. A.D. *3rd century*

Miss Alexander

JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER 1834-1902

BERTRAM NICHOLLS

It is not easy to reach any final conclusion about Whistler's painting, or to clear the mind of much irrelevant and controversial matter. It is hard to reconcile his life-long posturing and exhibitionism with the extreme restraint and quietude of his work. And he has been much written about. For Ruskin, who was never in doubt, his pictures were an abomination of 'Cockney impudence'. For George Moore they were comparable to those of Velasquez. And later writers have been scarcely less extravagant or wide of the mark.

Whistler had two dominant characteristics: a sense of mystery and a sense of pattern. In the nocturnes these are sometimes in conflict, bursting rockets showing as so many spots of yellow paint adroitly placed on a dark ground—pattern without mystery. It was the dusk rather than the night that gave him his best effects. But the nocturnes are in any case only a minor product of Whistler's genius. They are completely overshadowed by at least three, and probably more, of his portraits: those of his mother, of Miss Alexander, and of Carlyle. They were all painted in the early seventies, and they have much in common. In Whistler's deliberate introduction and careful placing of purely decorative accessories there was nothing novel; it is what every decorative painter had done. But the pleasure he took in Japanese prints led him to flatten the pattern, making it more nearly two-dimensional. To reach this effect, he used the same devices in all these three pictures. Against a flat background parallel to the picture plane he arranged a silhouette in profile, where the modelling is less pronounced, and painted it in a veiled or fading light, where detail is less visible. Indeed, one would suppose that only the very last of the daylight was of any use to him. 'The dignity of the snow-capped mountain', he said, 'is lost in distinctness.' And not the snow-capped mountain alone. He was a painter of the crepuscular, a colourist in tender greys.

They are at their tenderest in the Miss Alexander. It is called a Harmony in Grey and Green, a description that would have occurred to nobody but Whistler. It is an arrangement in grey and black. A faintly greenish colour creeps into the grey in the wrap on the left-hand side, in the hat feather, and in the ribbons on the shoes; but the most positive colour is not green at all; it is the gold of the wrap's tassels, of the flower centres, and the butterflies. The greys play through the warmer colour of the hair, through the flesh (indeed the upper lip is decidedly grey) and even through the blacks, which are varied with great subtlety, the strongest accent in the picture being the black note under the arm. In description, so grey a world, such severe restriction in colour, suggest a general dreariness of effect. But they are magical greys, unmatched in any other painter's work. The picture has great distinction, and great beauty, but it is a sort of wistful beauty. For in all Whistler's best work a feeling of wistfulness is present, as it was conspicuously absent in his outward, everyday life.

He took much from Velasquez, and from the Japanese, but he took from them, and even from his sitters, only what served his purpose, which was the creation of beauty. It was to this end—and not for the sake of any close searching out of character—that Miss Alexander posed some seventy times for her portrait. 'Puir wee lassie!' Carlyle is reported to have said. For he, too, had been a sacrificial victim on the altar of Whistler's exacting art.

THE CULTURAL WAR

A note on the Intelligentsia of Alexandria

D. J. ENRIGHT

THIS brief note has risen out of an article in *Les Temps Modernes* (December 1950) by the French critic, Etiemble, who was lately head of the French Department of an Egyptian University in which I then occupied a more humble position. In the course of this article, 'Le français dans le Proche-Orient', M. Etiemble generates a moral indignation which might seem excessive in the most uncompromising and ingenious Moslem Brother. He refers excitedly to '*un impérialisme culturel qui le* (*i.e. le monde arabe*) *gêne, celui de l'Angleterre et des Yanquis*'. By Yankee imperialism M. Etiemble may be thinking of the cheap shiny novels which sell fairly well in the Middle East, or perhaps of coca-cola, a democratic beverage which reaches into the lankest of stomachs; but I fear that he is far out in his assumption of a British cultural imperialism: only too far out.

The following French visits to Alexandria during the last few years come immediately to mind: Gide, André Rousseaux, Louis Guilloux, Père Doncoeur (of the Jesuit literary, *Les Etudes*), Cocteau, the distinguished surgeon, Professor Leriche, exhibitions including work by Matisse, Picasso, Braque, Utrillo and Vlaminck, Jouvet, the *Comédie Française*, two ballet companies, Jacques Thibaud, and Edith Piaff. Over the same period I can recall only these few comparable English events: Raymond Mortimer (who gave one of his lectures in French), James Laver, the Robert Masters Quartet, and a handful of visiting professors under the aegis of the British Council, *en route* (perhaps too obviously) to India or Australia. As to the bread and butter of 'cultural imperialism', the English schools in the Middle East are at least equalled in reputation by the *lycées* of the Mission Laïque Française; and the Institutes of the British Council, most notable for honest language teaching, are not likely to restore the balance.

Let us look at the resident intelligentsia, the people who go to see or hear the distinguished visitor; to narrow the field, let us consider the intelligentsia of Alexandria. The common language of this intelligentsia is—as one might deduce from the paragraph above—French. There has never been a real English centre around which a cosmopolitan intelligentsia could gather —only a few isolated and transitory figures like Lawrence Durrell, who, for many Alexandrians, still constitutes their sole conception of contemporary English culture (a position held today perhaps by Robert Liddell). And, as M. Etiemble remarks pointedly, the English have never managed to produce a literary review in Egypt—he himself edited one there, *Valeurs*, over a number of years. English is the language of only one book, alas—the account-book!

The pity of it is that a measure of personal communication between English and Alexandrian intellectuals might have given the latter precisely that which they generally lack: a little rough vitality, and a freedom from passing fashions. The one great disease is an excess of 'taste': a nervous, enervating concentration on some niggling, precious excellence, carried to a degree unheard of in any of our native Ivory Towers. This tendency is strongest among Arab intellectuals (one of the most sensitive of whom is the Lebanese poet, Henri El Kayem, author of *Le Désert dans la Porte Céleste*); the refined 'imagism' of the more cloistered forms of classical Arabic poetry has, as it were, further succumbed to the allusiveness of the more precious manifestations of *symbolisme*. The Arab intellectual (generalisations have to be risked in an article of this size) rarely seems able to cope successfully with his own people: either he must banish them totally and (to our way of thinking)

savagely to the outer darkness of the bean-fields, or he must become a revolutionary pamphleteer. And it is because he has so far been able to steer a middle course that the Syrian writer, Albert Cossery, seems to me the most successful writer about Egyptian life as it is led by the majority. (His novel, *Maison de la Mort Certaine*, is available in English translation, where one is not upset by his bad French.) Not that he is, as Henry Miller has proclaimed, 'Tolstoy plus Dostoievsky': the Egyptian Soul, in any case, is much simpler than the Russian.

National characteristics do not necessarily disappear in a so-called cosmopolitan society; what often happens is that one or other characteristic develops in isolation from the rest—just as the average Alexandrian who does not know the English at home will conceive of us solely in terms of business men: rich; and soldiers: brutal, and pedagogues: poor. In the *milieu* of which I am speaking, one notices that the Arabs tend towards exquisiteness, the Russians towards expansiveness and uncertainty of temper, the French towards an over-bright intellectuality, the Jews towards a desperate *pastiche* (their eyes turned yearningly towards Paris in a manner that is both moving and irritating), while the Greeks are apt to show a heavy seriousness, a predilection for the 'profound' which seems always to be referring to their glorious and philosophical past.

The Alexandrian Greek is, of course, much less of an exile than the others; his compatriots control some of the key points —groceries, bars and bookshops; and there is, in fact, an Alexandrian-Greek review which appears once a year. But, in view of the fact that the Greek community practically comprises the 'middle class' of Alexandria, its contribution to the arts is not as lively as it might be; since Cavafy, Greek Alexandria has produced only one figure with anything of an international reputation—the pianist, Gina Bachauer. Yet it is true that the most interesting artist now living there is a Greek—an Athenian. Jean Pappas, unlike most of the local artists, lives both for, and by, his work (he was recently commissioned to do the memorial statue of the late president of the Greek community). There is nothing of the prevailing sin of polite dilettantism about Pappas; if he has something of that Greek weightiness, then with him it is a valid weightiness of chiselled stone, not of philosophical or literary intention. It is significant that wit—as abhorred of the amateur as is the scorpion's tail—is persistent in the drawings which were shown in his Alexandrian exhibition of February 1950, and that his peasant women and beggars—the stock Egyptian themes—are never merely pathetic, merely noble, or merely drab. It is to be hoped that the drawings, at any rate, may be shown in London—alas, Paris will probably get in first with the invitation!

Returning to the general question of what M. Etiemble so flatteringly calls our 'cultural imperialism' in the Middle East, what can we do in emulation of him and his *Relations Culturelles*? True, plain honest language teaching and London Matriculation do seem worthier than the fashionable froth often exuded by the French-sponsored institutions. But if the language is then to be used almost solely in the office, and perhaps even at that because it happens to be more or less the language of a larger and richer country, further to the west, which never invaded Egypt and has definitely the right attitude towards Communism . . . Well.

Well, one might, for a start, close down the Union Club, or liberalise it. We are not in a position to be haughty. And let there be an easier traffic between the two countries, a two-way traffic: there *are* commodities other than cotton and toilet preparations. And if our English teachers in Egypt were paid more generously, they could afford to spend less of their time on language and more on literature. As M. Etiemble points out, once good will has been established locally, cultural relations cost very little to keep up. Without that good will, we merely teach Caliban how to curse, and his expensive lessons are paid for by the English tax-payer—the distant Prospero whom he curses but has never known.

NEW BOOKS

SEVEN MAJOR DECISIONS By Sumner Welles. *Hamish Hamilton.* 15s.

Reviewed by Christopher Hollis

Mr. Sumner Welles is a loyal champion of Mr. Roosevelt. He takes seven major policies of Mr. Roosevelt's which are today commonly criticised and seeks to show that they were justified. They are his pre-war policy—'the last frail chance', as Mr. Welles calls it—the decision to recognise the Vichy Government during the war, Far Eastern policy before Pearl Harbour, the refusal to quarrel with the Argentine at the Rio de Janeiro Conference in 1942, the decision to postpone political and territorial decisions until after the war, Far Eastern policy from Pearl Harbour to Hiroshima and the creation of the United Nations. No one can have much wish to challenge Mr. Welles's general thesis or to quarrel with his loyalty, but his argument is not really so exciting as it at first appears. It amounts to little more than the contention that, when things went wrong, the fault was Mr. Cordell Hull's and that Mr. Roosevelt could not move more rapidly than public opinion would allow him. Of these excuses the first is a little tiresome. There was clearly a very bitter personal feud between Mr. Sumner Welles and Mr. Cordell Hull, but after all it was Mr. Roosevelt who put Mr. Hull into office and who kept him there. If Mr. Hull was as foolish a man as Mr. Welles thinks, Mr. Roosevelt must bear a share in the responsibility for his folly. The second excuse is, of course, a valid and important one. Unconsidering critics often blame politicians as if it were nothing but cowardice that prevented them doing what they saw should be done. It is, of course, a folly. The political leader can only go along as far as public opinion will allow him to go. This is true in America. I think that Mr. Sumner Welles's judgment on Mr. Neville Chamberlain might have been a little more just if he had remembered that it was true also in England.

Stated bluntly, Mr. Welles's justification of Mr. Roosevelt's pre-war policy amounts to little more than that he had no policy because public opinion would not allow him to have a policy. This is true and, if not very inspiring, it is about all that there is to be said. It does still remain a great and open question what Mr. Roosevelt would have done, and what he would have been able to do, if the Japanese had attacked Singapore or the Dutch colonies before they had attacked Pearl Harbour.

That Mr. Roosevelt was right in his support of Mr. Sumner Welles's policy of maintaining South American unity is, I think, beyond doubt. He was also doubtless right in his decision to postpone territorial decisions until after the war. Indeed, he had no alternative. Had the Allied coalition been a different one, there might well have been something to be said for an arrangement and publication of the peace terms, while the war was still on, but with Russia such an arrangement was clearly impossible. An attempt to make it was only too likely to lead to the Russians walking out of the Alliance and making a separate peace. Mr. Welles is in error when he says of Stalin, 'Up to the time of the deal with Hitler, he had consistently opposed all projects for the increase of Russian territory.' If Stalin had been willing to give satisfactory assurances about the Baltic States, the 1939 Pact between Great Britain and Russia might have been signed.

That Mr. Roosevelt was justified in a refusal to make detailed arrangements about post-war territorial adjustments is very clear. What is not so clear is whether he, and those who acted with him, were justified in their exceptions to that policy. Was there any valid reason in conceding the Curzon Line frontier while the war was still going on? Was there anything to be gained out of making Pacific concessions to Russia as a condition of ever coming into the war against Japan? It is true that without such concessions she probably would not have declared war on Japan, but would that have greatly mattered? Even granted that it was not foreseen that the collapse of Japan was quite so near at

hand, was it worth while to make concessions in order to get a Russian declaration of war? Japan's defeat was certain.

It was certainly Mr. Roosevelt's doing that the plans for the United Nations were drawn up when the war was still on. Whether that was a good thing or not depends on whether the United Nations is a good thing or not. I am inclined to think that on the whole they are—that on the whole it has proved a good forum for the debate against Communism and that on the whole the free nations have won that debate. But it is hard to be quite as naïve in one's optimism as Mr. Welles. It is yet to be seen how things will turn out. There is a great advantage in these international organisations, but there is also an enormous danger in them. The danger is that they will do nothing themselves and at the same time provide an excuse for other people to do nothing. There is no one who can be other than terrified at the supine failure of the United Nations to support the verdict of the International Court over Persian oil. Even the League of Nations never did anything quite as bad as that.

HOBBES AND HIS CRITICS

By John Bowle. *Jonathan Cape.* 10s. 6d.

Reviewed by C. H. Sisson

An atheistical monster, such as the one Thomas Hobbes led in by the nose, might have been kept as a pet in the England of the first half of the twentieth century. Hobbes's contemporaries were shocked by the appearance of the *Leviathan*; Lord Lindsay, in his introduction to an edition intended for everyman, could write without a shudder that Hobbes's theory of sovereignty 'is put into practice in the British Constitution.' The change represents a phase in the history of thought. The phase is over, and we begin once more to look at Hobbes's monster distrustfully. It has been clearly demonstrated to us, otherwise than in theory, what malice there can be in a government responsible to nothing but itself.

A time when the *Leviathan* is once more beginning to wear an ugly look is obviously a propitious one for a review and reassessment of the critics who assailed Hobbes in his life-time. Mr. Bowle, in a book which is put together in a neat and workmanlike manner and is consequently very readable, has examined the writings of ten men 'steeped in the old, psychologically satisfactory traditions, and how well,' he says, 'they realised the atrocious implications of the new point of view.' The new point of view is now an old one. It is now part of the political philosophy of everyman. Mr. Bowle speaks of the immediate influence of Hobbes being 'swamped' by the Whig outlook, but that is surely too strong an expression. If Whiggism owed nothing to Hobbes's pessimism, it owed something to his materialism. There is an authentic line of relationship from Hobbes through the Whigs to the Utilitarian intellectuals who, in Mr. Bowle's word, 'resurrected' Hobbes in the nineteenth century and so prepared the way for those of our contemporaries who most admire him. It is this weight of history behind us that makes it a little difficult for us to realise the force and depth of the original case against Hobbes. But it is because we are at the end of a tradition that is played out that it is so desirable for us to do so.

The constitutional disorders of the seventeenth century set men to reflecting on the foundations on which society was built, and most of the writers Mr. Bowle considers were serious-minded enough to be a little parochial and so to consider the matter in the context of the kingdom and church of England. They were none the worse for that. To look for a universal political doctrine before we have found one adjusted to the needs of these islands is to go hunting something more chimerical than the snark.

TURKISH CROSSROADS

By Bernard Newman. *Robert Hale.* 18s.

Reviewed by C. M. Woodhouse

In the past guide-books to foreign countries were written to introduce intending tourists to what they were going to see and to ease their difficulties in seeing it. Nowadays the purpose is quite different, or should be if the writer is thoughtful. What is needed is no longer an introduction but a substitute. Whether for political or for financial reasons, the chances are

that ninety-nine per cent of the readers of such a book are never going to see the country described at all. In the case of Turkey, Mr. Newman tacitly admits the fact in his last chapter, where he gives a few details of the cost of a visit. The fact is a very sad pity, for Turkey is today one of the most agreeable and friendly countries in the world for an Englishman to visit. But fortunately the substitute offered is also as agreeable as could be.

A popular travel-book is liable to become diffuse and aimless and even unreadable unless it has some sort of focus to give it point. Mr. Newman's point is indicated by his title. It is not strictly accurate to apply the metaphor of a cross-roads to Turkey as a whole, because although many historical routes and movements have passed across the Anatolian promontory, there is in fact only one important point at which they cross, which is the site of Istanbul. But this is a cross-roads in itself sufficient to justify the title —a cross-roads without rival in the world for dramatic significance and historical importance. It is, incidentally, one of the few really perfect sites in the world for a great capital; and it is only surprising that Mr. Newman does not include among the items of lore and learning, with which his book is stuffed, the story of the men who built their town (Chalcedon) on the wrong side of the Bosporus, and thus earned for it the name of 'the city of the blind' because they had failed to see the superiority of the site of Byzantium, which later became Constantinople and later still Istanbul. Theirs was indeed a blindness almost beyond belief.

It would be difficult, without a personal visit, to get a better impression of this cross-roads, and its place in past and modern history, than Mr. Newman's book conveys. With few exceptions, he is equally felicitous wherever he went in Turkey, which was a long way. One exception must be made of his method of conveying instructive information in the form of highly artificial dialogues, which plainly could not have taken place exactly in the form recorded, nor have been remembered from beginning to end if they had. His frankly didactic chapters are much more successful for being straightforward.

GUNPOWDER PLOT

By Hugh Ross Williamson. *Faber & Faber.* 21s.

Reviewed by Philip Hughes

Here is a rarely interesting book—its subject the most familiar event in all English history, unique, indeed, in that the memory of it is kept green by the sole piece of acted folk-lore that has survived the sophistication of the last, very secular hundred years. This annual popular commemoration, the rite preserved by the sole enthusiasm of small boys, has, long ago, lost all meaning—in reference to the events of 1605–6; and now comes Mr. Williamson to tell us that these events themselves never had the meaning we universally associate with them; that all we can really be certain of is that there was a plot—but what its object was, no one has ever had any means of knowing since John Streete's bullet killed Robert Catesby and Thomas Percy, 'resisting arrest', in the courtyard of Holbeach House, Staffordshire, on 8 November 1605, and since the gates of the Tower closed upon Thomas Winter, a few days later. All we can be certain of, it seems, is that Thomas Percy, who was plotting something against the State, did hire the house at Westminster. There is not a single feature of the great story that will bear serious examination; the sole sources of all of it are the 'confessions' of Faukes and Thomas Winter, both (as is shown in this book) tampered with by the government forgers and lawyer before they were put in at the trials.

Of the eight men tried and executed, three—Grant, Rookwood and Digby—knew almost nothing about the plot, it seems, and came into it less than a month before the appointed day. Tresham, again, the popular candidate for the serious authorship of the famous warning letter to Lord Monteagle—that is certainly a fake, and probably a fake concocted by the authorities in concert with Monteagle —only came into the plot eleven days before this missive was sent. He died in the Tower a month after his arrest, a month before the trials, poisoned (so some contemporaries thought): the man who knew too much. And as to the two leaders killed by the same bullet at

Holbeach House—whether another contemporary judgment was true or not, that orders were sent not to take them alive, true it certainly is that the man who fired the lucky shot was pensioned for life.

Over the great trial there hangs the same mysterious obscurity that fogs the inquiry about the real details of the plot. It took place in Westminster Hall, before a huge audience. The King, the Queen, and the heir to the throne were there, and all the parliament. And yet we have no knowledge of what happened except from the official report! Of no great trial since the time of Henry VIII 'are we so ignorant as to what actually occurred', one historian of English criminal trials will tell us, who says, also, of the account of it published by the government, 'a tale artfully garbled . . . to serve a State purpose and intended to mislead.' This official account gives Coke's great speech for the prosecution a masterly piece of such propaganda as trials behind the 'Iron Curtain' have made familiar to us. But of the prisoners—with one exeption—we are told nothing, save that they were shown the confessions bearing their signatures; that they acknowledged the signatures; that the confessions were read out that the Chief Justice thereupon summed up; and that the jury brought them in guilty. The men now had their chance to speak. What has the report to say? Merely this: two of them begged for mercy; a third said death was 'as good now as at another time, and for this cause rather than for another'; a fourth did no more than explain why he had pleaded 'Not Guilty'; Grant said, mysteriously, 'he was guilty of a conspiracy intended but never executed'; Thomas Winter begged for mercy for his brother; Rookwood acknowledged his offence was heinous, and so did Everard Digby.

With the men thus tried on 27 January 1606, there were indicted three others—not yet arrested: three Jesuit priests, whose names, indeed, head the indictment as chiefs and principals in the plot. And here it is that we make over contact with the second mystery which the affair presents. What share had the Government in the Powder Plot?

The belief, or theory, that Cecil helped on the plot, for reasons of state was not unknown at the time. But when, fifty years ago, a Jesuit historian making a scholarly re-examination of the traditional story, revived this hypothesis, the great S. R. Gardiner would have him laughed out of court for such credulousness. Every good Victorian 'liberal' knew that governments that were on the 'enlightened' side could never have acted like that; it was simply not in character. Nowadays we know more about what 'enlightened' governments are capable of, a consideration that has had its share in moving Mr. Williamson to this brilliant analysis and re-statement.

The new king, so Cecil saw, was tending, in 1603, towards the dangerous policy of religious toleration. Nothing would more speedily halt him, once and for all, than a concrete reminder of the classic realities: 'the scheming priests, the dreaded invader, the traitorous catholics'. Did Cecil really, in fact, welcome the first hints of something afoot, and thenceonward, set himself so to direct it that, at the right moment, it could be broken to the world as a Jesuit-inspired scheme of mass murder? No one can say so much, but as a speculation. Mr. Williamson is too acute a scholar, too level-headed, to destroy himself in such speculative constructions. But Cecil, this is certain, knew much; and the pattern of the certainly lying indictment is clear: the Jesuit plot, where the conspirators are the priests' tools; 'the late most barbarous Traitors, Garnet a Iesuite and his Confederates', as the title-page of the official account put it. And the ten weeks between the arrests and the trial were largely taken up—this we know from the Government's papers—with unsuccessful endeavours to trap and torture the prisoners into an admission that the Jesuits were 'in it' too.

Mr. Williamson does not offer us a mere critique. He has restored the whole history of the affair, bringing in new evidence, critically tested. It is not, by any means, a problem of documents that he presents, but a great human drama, deeply felt, skilfully set out, vividly described. And, whatever be the truth about the Gunpowder Plot, he has shaken to bits, not the legend alone, but the last historian who attempted to defend it.

THE EXPERT WITNESS BERNARD SPILSBURY: HIS LIFE AND CASES

By Douglas G. Browne and E. V. Tullett. *Harrap.* 21s.

Reviewed by Frederick Lawton

Nowadays defending counsel in criminal cases seldom try to challenge evidence of fact given by the Crown's expert medical witnesses. Both judges and juries have come to trust such witnesses and to accept their evidence as to facts, if not always their evidence as to the inferences to be drawn from the facts. Fifty years ago there was no such trust. The change was largely brought about by the high professional standards which were set by the late Sir Bernard Spilsbury in the course of his long career as honorary pathologist to the Home Office. This book describes that career.

Public trust and confidence in the evidence of the Crown's medical experts had been badly shaken in 1859 as a result of the unsatisfactory expert evidence which had been given for the Crown in the trial of Thomas Smethurst for murder by administering an irritant poison. He was convicted by the jury but shortly afterwards granted a free pardon. The experts had contradicted each other, in the words of the *British Medical Journal* 'in matters where there could be no possibility of doubt.' The *Lancet* and *The Times* delivered severe rebukes and the *Dublin Medical Journal* wrote of Dr. Alfred Taylor, the Crown's principal expert, that he had 'brought an amount of disrepute upon his branch of the profession that years will not remove.' This term of years came close on fifty.

What did remove it? The answer is to be found in Mr. Justice Darling's summing up to the jury in the Armstrong case which was tried at Hereford Assizes in 1922. 'Do you remember,' he said, 'Dr. Spilsbury? Do you remember how he stood and the way he gave evidence? Do you remember how, if there was any qualification to be made which told in favour of the defence, he always gave it without being asked for it? Did you ever see a witness who more thoroughly satisfied you that he was absolutely impartial, absolutely fair, absolutely indifferent as to whether his evidence told for one side or the other, when he was giving evidence in chief or when he was being cross-examined?'

Many of the cases in which Sir Bernard gave expert evidence have a vintage quality. Will there ever be anything to compare in public memory with the 1910 Crippen or the 1922 Thompson and Bywaters? Probably not. Wickedness isn't any duller than it was; but less is said about it, both in and out of Court. Modern trials are conducted by both judges and counsel in conversational tones which belie drama. Nowadays Marshall Hall's histrionics would cause sniggers rather than tension. Styles of advocacy have changed because juries have changed. Juries are no longer impressed by appeals to their emotions or even the dramatic dropping of a revolver. They want facts; and when the facts are deadly, conviction follows quickly. Humdrum trials cannot be written up by the Press as grim forensic battles because there is not enough newsprint available. No longer do the newspaper boys run along the streets shouting: 'Sir David opens Defence', to be followed half-an-hour later by another boy, with another edition, shouting: 'Defence doctor in the Box'.

If the Royal Commission on Capital Punishment advises the abolition of the death penalty and the government of the day accepts the advice, there will be an end to books about famous trials, because there will be very few long-drawn-out trials for murder—most murderers will plead guilty, as do most burglars.

THE GREAT BEAST

The Life of Aleister Crowley

By John Symonds. *Rider.* 21s.

Reviewed by Antony Borrow

Aleister Crowley, who died in 1947, is to most people a legend, a figure of monstrous but ill-defined depravity. Like Baudelaire, whose prose-poems he translated, he seemed to enjoy exaggerating his own legend, and to some extent to feed upon notoriety. Apart from the undeniable irregularity of his mode of life, there is another, subtler reason for the legend. Long after Christianity became the dominant orthodoxy, pockets of resistance

remained scattered throughout Europe, owing an allegiance to such older and darker gods as Pan or Priapus, who were equated in the Christian ethos with diabolism, not through any innate viciousness in their mysteries, but because they were non-Christian. It was in this sense that Crowley proclaimed himself as Evil, a grandiose way of emphasising that he wished to return to a revelation older than that of the pale Galilean. It is all the more ironic that he should be condemned by a tradition initiated by the orthodoxy to which few in this country now pay more than lip service, and that the popular press should play a rôle similar to that of St. Dominic towards the Albigenses. His erudition in the arcana of occultism was profound, his greatest contribution being the marriage of Tantric teaching to the Cabalistic tradition of the West. Nevertheless this contribution tends to be overshadowed by the selfish megalomania of the man, and by such distasteful incidents as his crucifixion of a toad, or the Serpent's Kiss, for the bestowal of which he had his front teeth especially filed.

John Symonds has wisely refrained from passing any judgment, moral or analytical. He has written what is far from being a gentle book, but it is a supremely honest one. The facts are presented without shame or prurience; they are often far from pleasant facts, but there are also moments of pathos, particularly the picture of Crowley's later years, dogged by ill-health, failure, and public opprobrium. It is a truism that what one man can bring himself to do, another can surely bear to look upon. Without such facts no rational assessment of the man is possible. They are presented in a dry, whimsical prose, reminiscent of Mr. Symonds's picaresque novel, *William Waste*, which is exactly right for such a narrative. Both the publishers, and the author, who has been to considerable pains to uncover records from obscure newspapers in many parts of the world, are to be praised for supplying an antidote to excessive sensationalism. The book also includes a number of remarkable and sometimes disturbing photographs, and an excellent bibliography of the writings of Aleister Crowley compiled by Gerald Yorke.

MARIANNE MOORE

Collected Poems. *Faber*. 12s.6d.

Reviewed By Kenneth Gee

Marianne Moore is a poet not directly concerned with great themes; and her poems avoid rhetoric. Her language has very often a dry, precise quality. Her poems are created from an unusually sharp observation, wide and eclectic reading, and deeply felt and understood experience. They are written on a syllabic basis and have sometimes a complex and skilful rhyming pattern. These are her self-imposed limitations which turn out to give her great strength as a poet, with a complete control of her material, and which make her difficult to quote, since the effect of her pertinent detail, her varying length of line—sometimes as short as one syllable—is cumulative: Marianne Moore never relies on the fine line; her poems do not need it; they are unities. Nevertheless there are memorable lines like these from 'A Grave':

> and the ocean, under the pulsation of
> lighthouses and noise of bell-buoys,
> advances as usual, looking as if it were
> not that ocean in which dropped
> things are bound to sink . . .

In many poems a tension arises between syllabic rhythms and the traditional rhythms of poetry, or between syllabic and speech rhythms. These subtle conflicts of rhythm, a flexible handling of line, and Marianne Moore's sharp visual sense, combine to overcome entirely, in her best poems, the danger of losing music, which would be involved for a lesser poet using her methods.

Man is kept in his place in Marianne Moore's poetry by the importance she gives to birds and beasts. This makes her essential humanity come out more strongly when it appears, as in these lines:

> . . . The prey of fear, he, always
> curtailed, extinguished, thwarted by the
> dusk,
> work partly done,
> says to the alternating blaze
> 'Again the sun!
> anew each day; and new and new
> and new,
> that comes into and steadies my
> soul.'

FRENCH, FLEMISH AND BRITISH ART

By Roger Fry. *Chatto & Windus.* 15s.

Reprinted from lectures given on the occasion of the Burlington House Exhibitions. The fact that many of Fry's views are not fashionable any longer does nothing to obscure his position as a director of taste at a critical point in history. He wrote about painting as it struck him, never hedged his bets as art critics do today, was not lukewarm, and became a dictator through force of personality. These short expositions of French, English and Flemish painters are written from his settled viewpoint when 'as we grow older and cease to be the astonished spectators of the unfolding of our own spirit, we go to art for what it brings to us from outside, what it will add to our life by its definite communications, by giving us feelings which we have never had and never could have but for the artist.'

J. M. W. TURNER

Charles Clare. *Phoenix House* (*The British Painters Series*). 18s.

The fourth volume in the British Painters series has a workmanlike text by the Director of the Courtauld Institute who gives a brisk account of Turner's development from a shrewd young man into an eccentric old party, and some technical analysis of the stages of his work. There is a very fair summing up of Turner's position as a romantic painter and of his discoveries, at the end of his life, in colour. Surely, however, Mr. Clare cannot be satisfied with the photographs which disastrously alter the values of the originals.

RECOLLECTIONS OF OCCURRENCES

Theatrical Memoirs of Thomas Snagg (or Snagge,) *The Dropmore Press.* 30s.

A handsome volume in a limited edition printed (for the first time) from a MS. in the possession of Snagge's family. Thomas Snagge was a monied semi-professional who played Dublin and the provinces, with occasional London appearances, in the 1770's, enduring all the discomfort of long journeys, missed coaches, theatres run up by carpenters and 'two shillings and a bit of candle in the house' which give chiaroscura to the memoirs of this date.

Harold Hobson, in his introduction, quite neglects the amazing richness of eighteenth-century theatrical autobiography. He does not mention Holcroft, Mrs. Inchbald, Mrs. Bellamy's *Confessions*, or even the incomparable Tate Wilkinson; of these poor Snagge (or Snagg) is but an ambling shadow. Like Wilkinson, he took extreme offence at Garrick for not recognising him as a genius, and still more, for trying to let him down lightly when he went for an audience at Drury Lane. But he has none of Wilkinson's dash and garrulous spite, and it is hard to believe that he ever cared deeply for the theatre. His book is a charming sidelight, however, on a period of bad plays and great actors.

TABLE GAMES OF GEORGIAN AND VICTORIAN DAYS

By F. R. B. Whitehouse. *Peter Garnett.* 21s.

A splendidly bound and boxed monograph, unpretentiously written by a toymaster and toy-maniac, and fascinating in all its details. ('Even while this book was being written three games previously unknown have come to light.') The few examples kept behind glass in the London Museum give no adequate preparation for Mr. Whitehouse's check-list which he has divided into Geographical, Historical and Instructional Games, Games of Moral Improvement and Games of Amusement. It is fascinating to find 1790 as the date for *The Game of Human Life* where a totum is recommended 'to avoid introducing the dice box into private families', but fascinating too are *The Adventures of Lord Pudding, My House to Furnish, Race to the Gold Diggings of Australia, Railroad Adventures, Every Man to his Station* (where the poor man has to finish in a cottage and the nobleman in a mansion). We are much more fortunate, by the way, in reading this book than our ancestors who actually had to buy and play these games, since most of the beautifully engraved boards are ludos, lottos and race games of the dullest description. On the other hand, *Combat with the Giant*, which Mr. Whitehouse in a burst of enthusiasm says 'would be a good one even today', is so terrifyingly complicated that it is hard to imagine anyone playing it without quarrelling over the rules.

NATIONAL DEVIATION

White Book on Aggressive Activities by the Governments of the U.S.S.R., Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria and Albania towards Yugoslavia. *Published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia.*

Reviewed by G. F. Hudson

Every modern State, when it is involved in a war, publishes a 'white', or otherwise coloured, official statement of its case against its adversary, with a selection of documents to support it. The Yugoslav Government, which since 1948 has been under various kinds of pressure from the States of the Soviet bloc, has not waited for any outbreak of full-scale war, but has now published for the record its account of the 'aggressive activities' of those States.

In form this Yugoslav White Book is just such a publication as any government might issue in order to justify its position in an international conflict, and though there are some allegations—such as those about frontier incidents—which cannot be independently verified, the record is in the main one of facts and events which are notorious and beyond doubt. The White Book has, however, some peculiar features which mark it off from the general run of publications of this type and serve to remind the reader that the conflict began, not as an ordinary dispute between States, but as a quarrel between Communist parties—or rather as a rift inside the Cominform. The White Book includes the correspondence exchanged in 1948 between the central committees of the Soviet and Yugoslav Communist parties—documents which would not be regarded as State papers in a normal national State. The story cannot, of course, be told without these letters, but the editors of the White Book apparently feel somewhat embarrassed in presenting this evidence to a mainly non-Communist public, and they head the section including the correspondence: *Attempt by the Governments of the U.S.S.R. and of the Eastern European countries to represent the policy of pressure against Yugoslavia as 'party criticism'*. This implies that the relations of Communist Yugolsavia with the Soviet Union before the quarrel were those of two ordinary sovereign

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States. In Marxist-Leninist theory, however, all the organs of the State must be controlled by the Communist party when it has political power, and decisions on policy are to be made, not by a Cabinet of Ministers, but by the Politburo of the party central committee; while between the Communist parties of different countries, whether in power or not, there have always existed, since the founding of the Comintern, relations quite different from those which are normal between the governments of equal sovereign States. Communists in power are not simply executives of their national States; they are members of an international fraternity which professes a common revolutionary doctrine and is supposed to act with disciplined unity against the capitalist world. Although the doctrine does not explicitly provide for the supremacy of the Kremlin, the Soviet party has always in practice claimed the rights of leadership over the non-Soviet parties; so far, in spite of the deviations of individuals and cliques, no national Communist party except the Yugoslav has openly repudiated Soviet leadership, and Tito himself originally owed his position to a Kremlin nomination after the internal crisis in the Yugoslav party in 1937.

In 1948 Stalin was faced for the first time with defiance, and the ordinary devices for maintaining international party discipline were found ineffective. The main Soviet method for controlling non-Soviet Communist parties was, and is, to penetrate them with secret agents of the MVD, who not only keep the Kremlin fully informed of what is going on but can also be used to remove, or suppress by intrigue, leaders or groups whose behaviour is considered unsatisfactory. Tito, however, kept the secret police apparatus of the Yugoslav party firmly in his own hands; this enabled him to survive when the break came, but it was also one of the causes of the tension with Moscow, for it meant that he was unwilling to submit to supervision. Further, his popularity as a national leader in the struggle against the German occupation meant that he was less dependent on Soviet support than any other Communist in Europe. The Soviet Union and the satellites turned on Yugoslavia the full barrage of Stalinite denunciation and anathema, and by all precedents Tito should either have humbled himself and confessed his sins or have been removed from the leadership by the rank and file of the Yugoslav party. But neither of these things happened. Nor did economic blockade bring Yugoslavia to her knees, for the West was ready to provide economic assistance to remedy the effects of Cominform pressure, and though this also lent colour to the Soviet accusations that Tito was really an agent of Western imperialism, it has enabled the régime so far to hold its own.

The failure to break Tito after the use of all measures short of war has undoubtedly been a heavy blow to the prestige of the Soviet Union and of Stalin himself. Nevertheless, Moscow has not taken the final step of making war on Yugoslavia. Nobody who studies the documents contained in the White Book can suppose that this abstention from war has been due to any lack of animosity or to any scruples about the use of violence. It appears to have been the result of three considerations: first, that the satellite States were not by themselves sufficiently strong or reliable to do the job, and Russia, therefore, could not wage the war vicariously; second, that there was no prospect of a quick decision, but the probability of a long campaign with a correspondingly increased risk of international complications; and third, that the American stake in Greece and Turkey under the 'Truman Doctrine' made American intervention very likely. In contrast to this situation, Moscow approved the aggression in Korea because the North Korean army was strong enough to undertake the campaign by itself, because there was every reason to believe that South Korea could be crushed in a matter of days, and because official statements in Washington had indicated that there would be no American intervention. From a comparison of these two cases it is possible to draw some significant conclusions about the workings of the Stalinite mind when decisions on peace and war have to be taken.

NEW NOVELS

MY FELLOW DEVILS By L. P. Hartley. *James Barrie.* 12s. 6d.
MR. BELUNCLE By V. S. Pritchett. *Chatto & Windus.* 12s. 6d.
THEY CAME TO A MOUNTAIN By Pat Miles. *Chapman & Hall.* 10s.
HANGSAMAN By Shirley Jackson. *Gollancz.* 10s. 6d.

Reviewed by Stevie Smith

Mr. Hartley's genius is born of innocence and intelligence and it is these virtues he gives to his heroes and heroines; Eustace had them (of the famous Eustace trilogy) and so has Margaret, the fair heroine of this new novel. Margaret loves her practical old retired father and she loves her social work and at twenty-eight she is already a J.P. She soon gets engaged to Nick, a barrister, and now her dashing young worldly friend Diana invites them to a cinema to see that famous film star Colum McInnes of tough parts. Margaret has never seen him before; she is suddenly bewitched and she asks him to her engagement party (he was at school with Nick). Nick is furious, he thinks he hates Colum, and the engagement is broken off and now Margaret is going to marry Colum. He says he is a 'bad' Catholic and wants Margaret to become a Catholic because she will be a 'good' one and save him. Margaret is a very truthful lady, she loves truth and honesty. She goes to see Father McBane, but he says she wants to become a Catholic for the wrong reasons and warns her not to. This interview is wonderfully painted by Mr. Hartley and now we see how serious the book is going to be. Colum and Margaret go to Venice and are married there. Mr. Hartley has a rich gift for writing letters in character; Diana's is superb, so are Margaret's, so is Margaret's diary; they are adroit means of variation, very artful and amusing. But now, slowly and surely, the corrupt nature of Colum—vulgar, a thief, 'upon no centre placed'—and of his life and associates, are played out. This novel that might have seemed so fair 'and amusing, you know' is now in the full spate of a novel of conflict between good and evil. Yet Colum is no apparent devil—he truly loves Margaret, but it will not save him—neither are his friends—'not bad', you might say, and yet they are damned. 'Leave him,' Father McBane says to Margaret. And again, at the feast to celebrate the success of Colum's new film, *The Devil is So Distinguished*, when everybody is roaring toasts to 'Good old Devil, devil, devil', he seems to be sitting there silent, looking reproachfully at Margaret. But he is dead. Is it his ghost, for a warning?—'Leave him'. When Margaret's child is born, when Colum is falsely cleared of a true police charge, when even the ex-fiancé Nick is won over by his charm (he was in love with him at school) and 'helplessness' ('He needs a good woman's love', *et cetera*) Margaret does leave him. The world shakes its head and so will many stupid readers. But the truth is that innocence and intelligence have won free after hazards. It is a fine, exciting and delicate novel, often gay; but beneath it lie a judge's emblems, the sword and scales of Rhadmanthus. Never has Mr. Hartley written better.

Mr. Beluncle is a lower middle class business man who adheres to the esoteric sect of Mrs. Parkinson. 'At twelve o'clock Mr. Beluncle's brown eyes looked up, moving together like a pair of love birds—and who were they in love with but himself?' He is a Napoleon of business shifts and a Napoleon at home. But he has dreams that go racing ahead upon fantastic schemes that grow larger and larger; so he is always nearly bankrupt. Mrs. Beluncle is downtrodden and delights in it; also she has her own way of asserting herself. This is by being very slovenly, leaving her dirty blouse unbuttoned and her hair hanging down in wisps; and also by arguing

sometimes for, and sometimes against, her husband's mistress and business partner, Mrs. Truslove. They are going to the Parkinson meeting to hear a lecture by Mr. Van der Hoek. 'We had a dog called Van when I was a child' (says Mrs. Beluncle). 'He died. Van, Van, Van, I cried out all night when I was little. It broke my heart. Oh how I loved him. I would have died for him.' Mrs. Beluncle was surprised by herself. 'Where is everything now? she asked with fear.' There is a feverish feeling in this book and a feeling of the author's affection and amazement. There is the feeling of fever in the little town of Boystone, with its shabby poor shops, and the light shining through the dirty windows. Mrs. Truslove's cripple sister looks out of her window and sees the life going by. Lady Roads is a member of the Parkinson sect; she visits the cripple girl and often scolds her. After the feverish, fog-filled scene when the mean man runs at the cripple and she falls, showing her suspender elastic, and kicks grotesquely and can take a few steps, Lady Roads comes and scolds her again but for love, she should have walked before and must now become a 'healer', after giving 'testimony'. Fog and fever and the light shining through the fog, and the odd lively people, and the fever in the bones—these are the pictures that Mr. Pritchett with infinite loving patience brings to life. These pictures come thick and fast but the story marches skilfully. Mr. Pritchett is a great writer, but sometimes he seems also to be a great painter.

Miss Pat Miles is very good. Her story of post-war India shifts over the frontiers of trouble. There is war between Pakistan and Hindustan and there is some trouble too among the mixed English, American and Indian people who are stranded in a snowed-up small village on the Himalayan foothills. Simon the English writer falls in love with the young Indian girl Maya who is married to an austere and fighting idealist. The love between this young man, who is very young in himself in spite of complications, and the beautiful simple Maya, who is so upright, strong and intelligent, is beautifully imagined and told. It is a gingerly path Miss Miles has chosen; it is the sort that might so easily be false, but she treads it firmly with as much skill and courage as to bordering precipices as her soldiers show when they come down the icy mountains on spades. One would like to know how this feat is performed. There is danger to the spade travellers of cutting off their hands. Miss Miles has a pleasant simple style that is imaginative too and she appreciates what is ludicrous in tragedy. Her portrait of that grand girl, the American lady of riper years, is very funny.

Miss Jackson, whose short story *The Lottery* won her fame, has now written a novel. It is about Natalie, a young girl who has a disturbing relationship with her father. He is a literary person and likes to see his young daughter's writings every morning in the study. Natalie's mother, a healthier type, is mocked by her husband and this young daughter he so dearly loves. Natalie is a dreamy girl and her dreams get mixed up with the narrative; she is devoted to herself and imagines Natalie in the middle of a murder story, and Natalie being the literary lion's hostess-daughter, and Natalie the young girl going into a dark wood. She is a pretty girl, bright and morbid. Natalie now goes to college and these American college scenes are always so fascinating to English readers; Miss Jackson's have about them something of the delicious horror we got in *The Lottery*.

Natalie is not a popular girl because she will go off alone. She walks out of the odd initiation ceremony. This is a 3 a.m. round-up of 'froshes'. The older students wear masks but they do not quite know what to do with the 'froshes' when they have got them. 'Are you a virgin?' they ask; 'Tell a dirty story.' 'Don't know any.' 'Excused.' Before long, superior Natalie is caught up in a teasy tangle with the wicked girl Tony. The last few pages where Natalie and Tony go off in the tram to the slum part of the town and then to the towny little wood in darkest winter rain is a very good piece of forlorn abandon. Natalie comes back to college on a car-lift, feeling at last 'Grown-up and free'. One does not know why. And at home there is lurking the jealous painful father, writing the arch 'literary' letters to his daughter. It is an odd and gifted book.

CHILDHOOD AT ORIOL

By Michael Burn. *Rupert Hart-Davis.* 15s. The children are Sarah and Merrick, the children of Mrs. MacManus, whose husband was killed in 1917 and buried at Oriol. Mr. Burn's first novel, *Yes Farewell*, was an excellent description of life in a prison camp; in this new novel he describes life in what had once been an artillery camp among the sands and pines of the North coast of France, but turned by a financier into a holiday resort, with grand hotels, golf course, and villas, as a 'living memorial' to his son, also buried at Oriol. The wars hang over the adults who live there, but for the children Oriol is home. Children are notoriously difficult to write about—as many novelists have discovered too late—but Mr. Burn is entirely successful with his two charmingly normal children in an abnormal world.

THE CASTLE OF ARGOL

By Julien Gracq, translated by Louise Varèse. *Peter Owen.* 10s. 6d.

Reviewed by P. M. Fitzgerald

Julien Gracq, so brilliant, unkind and penetrating a critic of modern French literature, is, let's admit it, a disappointment in his own novels and plays. He is a devotee of the school of Gothic terror to which Freudian symbolism has added a new skeleton in the cupboard and which he says is 'the only one—discussion on the subject being no longer possible' to bring in the post-war period something more than the hope of a renewal.' The models of this school are *The House of Usher*, *The Castle of Otranto* and Junger's *On the Marble Cliffs*, its *mystique* is essentially German and even Wagnerian, the heretical love-is-death, eternal renunciation theme which de Rougemont traced in his *Passion and Society*; a typical incident would involve someone's being stabbed (having his brains blown out) in the moonlight whose brightness reveals a trickle of blood (recalling the perpetual wound of Amfortas), and the finely chiselled lines of cheek and chin. I must add at once that M. Gracq has *deliberately* chosen this creaky old machine of terror and writes, in a notice to the reader, that 'the always alluring repertory of crumbling castles, noises,

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lights, spectres in the night and dreams, enchants us particularly by its utter familiarity . . . by warning one in advance that one is going to shudder. . . . it would seem incontestably that the writer can only triumph under these concentrated, but infinitely multiplicable signs.' In *The Dark Stranger* these symbolic horrors took place in a second-class seaside resort where they were not altogether at home, but *The Castle of Argol* has an 'all out' Gothic or Poe-like setting. A young man, the last scion of a rich and noble family, tires of his immensely brilliant career and retreats to an immensely mysterious castle in Brittany staffed with silent retainers and surrounded by impenetrable forests. There he is to study philosophy (Hegel in particular) with his friend Herminien who brings with him a beautiful woman, and there is worked out a love-jealousy-separation-death *motif* which can only be solved with poison and the knife—'and out of breath now, he felt that they were about to overtake him, and in the omnipotent weakness of his soul, he felt the icy flash of a dagger gliding between his shoulder blades like a handful of snow.' M. Gracq has written the story in the most elaborate, allusive and heavily charged style, difficult to put into English, but surely not so difficult as to justify the flat-footed translation. *The Castle of Argol* is not a success, but somewhere in this writer there is the necessary reserve of strength to write a great book.

NEW REVIEWS RECEIVED

ROMAN 4

Editors: Pierre de Lescure et Célia Bertin.

Subscription: fr. 1200 for six numbers. On reaching its fourth issue *Roman* has received (apparantly to the amazement of its editors) some kind of prize for French literary magazines which it deserves, probably, for its bold specialisation and its staggeringly well-designed cover by Henri Matisse. *Roman* is entirely devoted to discussions of the art of the novelists, reviews of novels, and extracts from new and newish work by European novelists; in these last the editors lean rather to Scandinavia and the present number is weighed down with a translation from an Icelandic saga and an extract from the memoirs of Stig Dagerman. The Americans, and 'Stephen et M. Bloom' also tend to haunt its pages. But the critical articles are full of interest and the notes glance at those fascinating rows in French literary circles.

FOYER 1. (*Quarterly*)

Chairman of the Editorial Board: Sacheverell Sitwell. *Staples Press.* 7s. 6d. The quintessence of Beaumontism and Sacheverell Sitwellism between maroon Victorian wallpaper covers 'our aim being to offer the music and theatre-loving public all that is best of old and new'—but the result being a kind of elaborate parlour game where we all pretend to know a little more than we do and the answer is always a coloured lithograph. Articles on the *Teatro della Pergola*, old clavichords, extract from the diary of a pupil of notes on the Sadler's Wells dancers, etc., and a not quite in key but refreshingly straightforward appreciation of Vaughan Williams by Sir Stewart Wilson.

SPAZIO.

Review of arts and architecture, edited by Luigi Moretti. Subscription: 9,600 lire per annum.

DOMUS.

Review of arts and architecture, edited by Gio Ponti. Subscription: 6,000 lire per annum. Both obtainable from *Alec Tiranti.* These two monthlies beat our *Architectural Review* at its own game of combining serious professional review with manias and absurd elegancies, and anyone, indeed, who values elegance, should try to get hold of them. *Domus* is the more light-hearted and is chequered with house plants, straw statues, and frightening patchwork quilts and india-rubber furniture. *Domus* 9 reprints an interesting lecture on the beginnings of modern architecture by Professor Giulio Carlo Argan and Mario Labò. *Spazio* specialises in art criticism, with lavish colour illustrations, and recently published a symposium on abstract art in America and Europe which was a model of its kind.

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